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All the Emperor's Men (and His Nephews)

Paideia and Networking Strategies at the Court of Andronikos II Palaiologos, 1290–1320

NIELS GAUL

*In memory of Anna Christidou, whose warm friendship
and infectious enthusiasm for all things Palaiologan are very much missed*

Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282–1328), who had the reputation of a lover of learning, arranged for, or permitted, no fewer than six of his sons and nephews to marry daughters of his learned, middling-stratum ministers.¹ Both quantitatively and

qualitatively, these matches form a unique cluster in the Byzantine millennium (fig. 1).² The emperor's second-born son, the *despotes* Konstantinos, was married to Theodoros Mouzalon's daughter Eudokia;³ the emperor's third-born son, the *despotes* Ioannes—against the express will of his mother, Andronikos's second wife⁴—to Nikephoros Choumnos's daughter Eirene. His “premier nephew,” the *panhypersebastos* Ioannes Palaiologos, wed Theodoros Metochites' daughter Eirene; other nephews—the *protosebastos* Andronikos

1 While in late Byzantium membership of the aristocracy was strictly speaking not hereditary—it needed to be reaffirmed and, if achieved, reperformed with every generation—from the Komnenian into the Palaiologan period a fairly stable cluster of “first-tier” aristocratic clans emerged. In contemporary sources this top group comprising the senate and “the best”—ἡ βουλὴ / οἱ ἄριστοι (D. Tsames, ed., *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικά ἔργα*, 2 vols. [Thessalonike, 1985], 1:164.31–32)—was followed by the diffuse “middling” social stratum—*mesoi* or “second and middle tier” (δευτέρα καὶ μέση μοῖρα, *ibid.*, 164.32–33). In this stratum, lower officials at court, in towns, or in the retinues of aristocrats and metropolitans; episcopal dignitaries or bishops; schoolmasters; merchants, traders, and shipowners met with members of the petty aristocracy, e.g., small *pronoia* holders or urban *archontes*. For this last group, *paideia* was a career facilitator. Together these two tiers formed late Byzantium's social elite while internally divided by the considerable gap, vividly exemplified in Alexios Makrembolites' dialogue between the rich and the “poor.” Middling-stratum—perhaps somewhat counterintuitively in view of the modern concept of “middle classes”—is thus to be understood in an elite sense, especially when compared to the immense remainder of society, the *demos*, i.e., the lower classes or “third part” (τρίτη μοῖρα, L. Schopen and I. Bekker, eds., *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1829–55) [henceforth, Greg.], 13.10 [2:674.5]). See in general K.-P. Matschke and F. Tinnfeld, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz: Gruppen, Strukturen, Lebensformen* (Cologne, 2001); specifically on the aristocracy, A. E. Laiou, “The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development,” *Viator* 4

(1973): 131–51; D. Kyritses, “The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997); I. Antonopoulou, “La question de l’‘aristocratie’ byzantine: Remarques sur l’ambivalence du terme ‘aristocratie’ dans la recherche historique contemporaine,” *Symmeikta* 15 (2002): 257–64; D. Stathakopoulos, “Critical Study: The Dialectics of Expansion and Retraction: Recent Scholarship on the Palaiologan Aristocracy,” *BMGS* 33, no. 1 (2009): 92–101; on *pronoia* holders, M. C. Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge, 2013), 241–596.

2 Cf., by means of contrast, P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 210–11 on that emperor's fierce reaction to matches of middling-stratum men with noble women, and his desire to control aristocratic marriages.

3 For late Byzantine court dignities and offices see R. Macrides, J. Munitiz, and D. Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies* (Farnham, 2013), 26–115, 274–358 and table 4, on 455–64.

4 Yolanda/Eirene (PLP 21361), daughter of Margrave William VII of Montferrat. See A. Failler, ed., *Georges Pachymères, Relations historiques*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1984–2000), 10.7 (4:319.20–22) [henceforth, Pach.]; Greg. 7.5 (1:240.15–241.13).

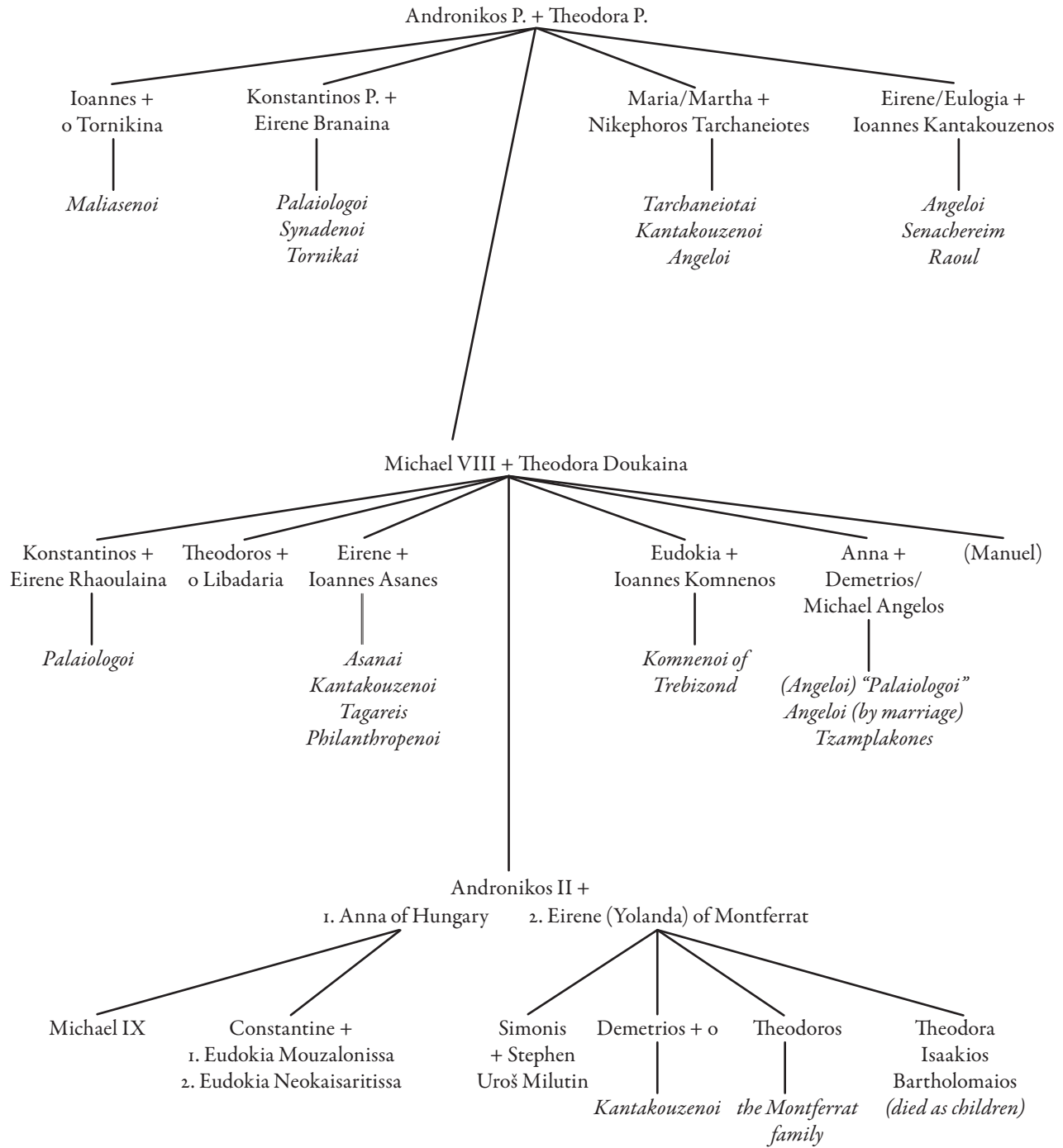


FIG. 1. Marriage alliances of three generations of Palaiologoi, Michael VIII to Michael IX; o = unknown first name (taken from D. Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 226–27)

Palaiologos,⁵ the Trapezuntine prince Michael Komnenos, the *pinkernes* Alexios Philanthropenos—the *megas logariastes* Konstantinos (?) Kokalas's daughter and Konstantinos Akropolites' daughters respectively. Gregoras reports in a lengthy anecdote that the same *despotes* Konstantinos Palaiologos who had taken Eudokia Mouzalonissa as his first wife was later besmitten by Eudokia daughter of the *protasekretis* Manuel (?) Neokaisareites for her outstanding beauty, wit and learning.⁶ When the Mouzalonissa died, he wed the Neokaisareitissa. This last may be a case apart; the emperor does not seem to have objected though. Theodoros Mouzalon, Konstantinos Akropolites, Nikephoros Choumnos, Theodoros Metochites, and, to a lesser degree, Manuel Neokaisareites and Konstantinos Kokalas shall henceforth be referred to as the *core actors*—or *core nodes*—of a network that is the focus of this essay.⁷

To appreciate the significance of these marriages it is important to keep in mind that in Byzantium, from the twelfth century onward, degrees of family relation to the emperor counted as much as, and frequently more than, court dignities and offices.⁸ It is perhaps even more important to remember

that Andronikos II pursued such policies only a few decades after the bloody slaughter of the middling-stratum Mouzalon brothers at the instigation of his own usurping father,⁹ the *megas konostaulos* Michael Palaiologos (who reigned, as Michael VIII, 1259–82), at the tomb of deceased emperor Theodoros II Laskaris (1258)¹⁰—a usurpation that still cast its shadow some thirty years later.¹¹ To which degree these murders were prompted by Theodoros II's unusual marriage policies (discussed below), remains an open question;¹² at any rate Andronikos II pursued these matches in the face of considerable opposition from members of his own family as well as the patriarch,¹³ and he inversed the pattern set by his immediate predecessors,¹⁴ and the Komnenoi before them. Forging marriage ties between the ruling

5 At the time of marriage; later *protobestiarios*.

6 Table 1: no. 6.

7 For “core actors” or “core nodes”—hubs of the network in question—see A.-L. Barabási, *Linked: The New Science of Networks* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 55–78 with further literature.

8 P. Frankopan, “Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium,” *EHR* 122 (2007): 1–34; Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos*, 180–201. For instance, Andronikos II never granted any dignity to his brothers, Konstantinos and Theodoros, while their father, Michael VIII, had revoked his brother Ioannes' despotic dignity upon Andronikos II's coming of age: P. Magdalino, “Notes on the Last Years of John Palaiologos, Brother of Michael VIII,” *REB* 34 (1976): 143–49. In terms of marriage policies, as in many other aspects such as the revival of rhetoric—cf. R. Macrides, “From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: Imperial Models in Decline and Exile,” in *New Constantines*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1992), 269–82—the early Palaiologoi seem to have adopted and adapted networking strategies initially practiced by the twelfth-century Komnenian emperors; Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos*, 258–59 concluded that “perhaps the most important characteristic of a Komnenian chief minister . . . was membership either by blood or by marriage of the extended imperial family.” All these marriages were arranged between the minister himself and a Komnenian bride; top ministers thus honored usually stemmed from families of pre-Komnenian aristocratic status, such as Theodoros Stypeiotes or Theodoros Kastamonites.

9 Pach. 1.8 (1:41.4–43.3).

10 A. Heisenberg, ed., *Georgii Acropolitae opera*, rev. ed. P. Wirth, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1978), § 75 (155.10–156.18) [henceforth, Akrop.]; Pach. 1.18–19 (1:79.11–89.26); Greg. 3.3 (1:65.9–66.11). Cf. Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 293–304.

11 E.g., T. Shawcross, “In the Name of the True Emperor: Politics of Resistance after the Palaiologan Usurpation,” *BSI* 66 (2008): 203–27 at 205–7; G. Prinzing, “Ein Mann τυραννίδος ἄξιος: Zur Darstellung der rebellischen Vergangenheit Michaels VIII. Palaiologos,” in *Lesarten*, ed. I. Vassil, G. Henrich, and D. R. Reinsch (Berlin, 1998), 180–97.

12 In a crucial passage, Pach. 1.12 (55.11–17) states that Laskaris intended these—apparently unprecedentedly—frequent marriages to be beneficial to both parties (ἐν εὐεργεσίας μέρει καὶ ἀμφοτέροις τὸ κῆδος ὁ κρατῶν ἐπιθεῖ) but had to impose them (ᾧριστο). Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy” (n. 1 above) 297–98 interprets this along the Komnenian trajectories (n. 8 above) as “a sign of favour towards that family rather than a disgrace”; it does not seem to have been perceived as such by the noble families involved. Specifically, Laskaris forged bonds between his trusted men, Georgios and Andronikos Mouzalon, and Michael Palaiologos's niece Theodora Palaiologina Kantakouzene and the daughter of the recently dismissed *protobestiarios* Alexios Raoul respectively. Theodora had to be stopped from defending her husband Georgios Mouzalon in 1258 (Pach. 1.19 [1:89.16–20]).

13 The match with the Choumnos family seems especially to have caused opposition; see Pach. 10.7 (4:317.9–319.26) and A.-M. Talbot, ed., *The Correspondence of Athanasius I Patriarch of Constantinople* (Washington, DC, 1975), 78 (ep. 37.33–36). Choumnos later married his eldest son, Ioannes, to a more distant relative of emperors: J. Verpeaux, *Nicéphore Choumnos: homme d'état et humaniste byzantin* (Paris, 1959), 44 and n. 5; it remains open whether this latter case is connected to the Kassianos affair, below, p. 264 and n. 95.

14 His father Michael left Georgios Akropolites' match with his own (extended) family intact and linked his *protasekretis* Michael Kakos Senachereim to the Philanthropenoi (Pach. 2.13 [1:157.1–2]) and, later, Theodoros Mouzalon to the Kantakouzenoi, see p. 253

clan and middling-stratum literati was, unsurprisingly, not an idea that originated with Andronikos II; novel, however, were the frequency with which such matches occurred in his reign and the prominence of the Palaiologoi involved.

Drawing on select concepts of social network analysis,¹⁵ this article seeks to systemically interpret the marriage alliances described above, as key links in the continuously evolving “small-world” network connecting the first and second tiers of late Byzantine society.¹⁶ It does so without disregarding the more obvious reasons behind such matches cited by the sources, as reward for loyal services, i.e., as expressions of imperial favoritism, or for the prospective dowry.¹⁷ At the same

and n. 45. This seems altogether closer to the Komnenian precedent (n. 8 above) but cf. Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 302–3.

15 Network approaches have been profitably applied to many aspects of Byzantine studies following M. Mullett’s pioneering *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot, 1997). In addition to the examples in this volume see especially J. Preiser-Kapeller, “Complex Historical Dynamics of Crisis: The Case of Byzantium,” in *Krise und Transformation*, ed. S. Deger-Jalkotzy and A. Suppan (Vienna, 2012), 69–127; idem, “*He ton pleionon psephos*: Der Mehrheitsbeschluss in der Synode von Konstantinopel in spätbyzantinischer Zeit—Normen, Strukturen, Prozesse,” in *Genesis und Dynamiken der Mehrheitsentscheidung*, ed. E. Flaig (Munich, 2012), 203–27; idem, “Großkönig, Kaiser und Kalif—Byzanz im Geflecht der Staatenwelt des Nahen Ostens, 300–1204,” *Historicum* 106 (2011): 26–47, and various papers available on Preiser-Kapeller’s highly informative profile on academia.edu (e.g., “A New View on a Century of Byzantine History: The Vienna Network Model of the Byzantine Elite,” which complements this essay); in neighboring medieval studies, see R. Gramsch, *Das Reich als Netzwerk der Fürsten: Politische Strukturen unter dem Doppelkönigtum Friedrichs II. und Heinrichs (VII.)*, 1225–1235 (Ostfildern, 2013).

16 D. J. Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (New York and London, 2003), 69–100; Barabási, *Linked* (n. 7 above), 41–54; J. Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, 2013), 139–45.

17 On the example of Choumnos Pach. 10.7 (4:317.10–12): “... he wished to honor the *epi tou kanikleiou* Choumnos, as a trusted and most excellent assistant in his services, who above all had prepared a very rich dowry for his daughter. ... He believed this to be of no less use for that one [the bridegroom, Alexios Komnenos] as for the affairs of the Romans; but he also served his trusted man, honoring him with a marriage into his family, because he counted him among the most well-disposed” (... τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ κανικλείου Χοῦμνον θέλων ἀγάλλειν, ὥς πιστὸν ὑπηρετὴν καὶ ἐφ’ οἷς ὑπούργει τὸν δοκιμώτατον, ἅλλως τε καὶ πολυταλάντους τὰς προίκας τῇ θυγατρὶ ἐτοιμάσαντα. ... συμφέρειν γὰρ ᾤετο οὐχ ἥττον ἐκείνῳ ἢ τοῖς Ῥωμαίων πράγμασιν, ἐθεράπευε δὲ καὶ τὸν οἰκείον, τῷ ἀπὸ γένους κῆδει τιμῶν, ὥς καὶ αὐτὸν τοῖς εὐνουστάτοις ἐξεταζόμενον). Cf. *ibid.* 9.5 (4:413.24–25).

time, the core actors are but the most prominent subset of a far larger number of literati drafted into service at the emperor’s court, all of whom developed links to the emperor, to their aristocratic colleagues in the ranked hierarchy, and to each other; they must not be omitted from this study either.

There are considerable methodological challenges to analyzing this network (fig. 2). Most traceable networks, such as rhetorical or epistolary ones—but even links mentioned in historiography¹⁸—were purposely “regulated” by either the author or someone close to him.¹⁹ Akropolites, Choumnos, and Metochites closely supervised the publication of their *œuvres* in order to fashion their rhetorical selves, as did the patriarch Georgios/Gregorios Kyprios or, on a somewhat lower social level, literati such as Theodoros Hyrtakenos, Michael Gabras, or Manuel/Matthaios Gabalas the later metropolitan of Ephesos. The logic informing such compilations, *conditio sine qua non* for anticipating “observational errors,” is only now being examined.²⁰ Combining such subjective networks into an overall intersubjective network of the period without interpretively accommodating their biases would leave their asymmetries unchecked.²¹ Other key sources are simply

18 For instance, Pachymeres reports in detail on only those marriages involving *mesazontes* and the emperor’s immediate family (table 1, nos. 1 and 3) and is less interested in others (no. 2). If fed into a database the best-documented nodes inevitably appear as the most central ones.

19 A. Riehle, “Epistolography as Autobiography: Remarks on the Letter-Collections of Nikephoros Choumnos,” *Parekbolai* 2 (2012): 1–22 or P. Hatlie, “Life and Artistry in the ‘Publication’ of Demetrios Kydones’ Letter Collection,” *GRBS* 37 (1996): 75–102.

20 F. Tinnefeld, “Zur Entstehung von Briefsammlungen in der Palaiologenzeit,” in *Πολύπλευρος Νοῦς*, ed. C. Scholz and G. Makris (Leipzig, 2000), 365–81; N. Papatriantaphyllou-Theodoride, “Γύρω ἀπὸ τοῦ θέματος τῆς παράδοσης τῶν βυζαντινῶν ἐπιστολῶν,” in *Μνήμη Σταμάτη Καρατζά: Ερευνητικά προβλήματα νεοελληνικῆς φιλολογίας καὶ γλωσσολογίας; Πρακτικά Επιστημονικῆς Συνάντησης, Θεσσαλονίκη 5–7 Μαΐου 1988* (Thessalonike, 1990), 93–100; S. Kotzabassi, “Zur Überlieferung von Briefcorpora in der Palaiologenzeit,” in *Handschriften- und Textforschung heute: Zur Überlieferung der griechischen Literatur; Festschrift für Dieter Harlfinger aus Anlass seines 70. Geburtstages*, ed. C. Brockmann, D. Deckers, L. Koch, and S. Valente (Wiesbaden, 2014), 231–38; for a recent example focusing on a letter collection omitted from discussion below, E. Taxides, *Μάξιμος Πλανούδης: Συμβολή στη μελέτη του corpus των επιστολῶν του* (Thessalonike, 2012). For further bibliography see below.

21 Cf. A. Schor, *Theodoret’s People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley, 2011), 11–12. While one

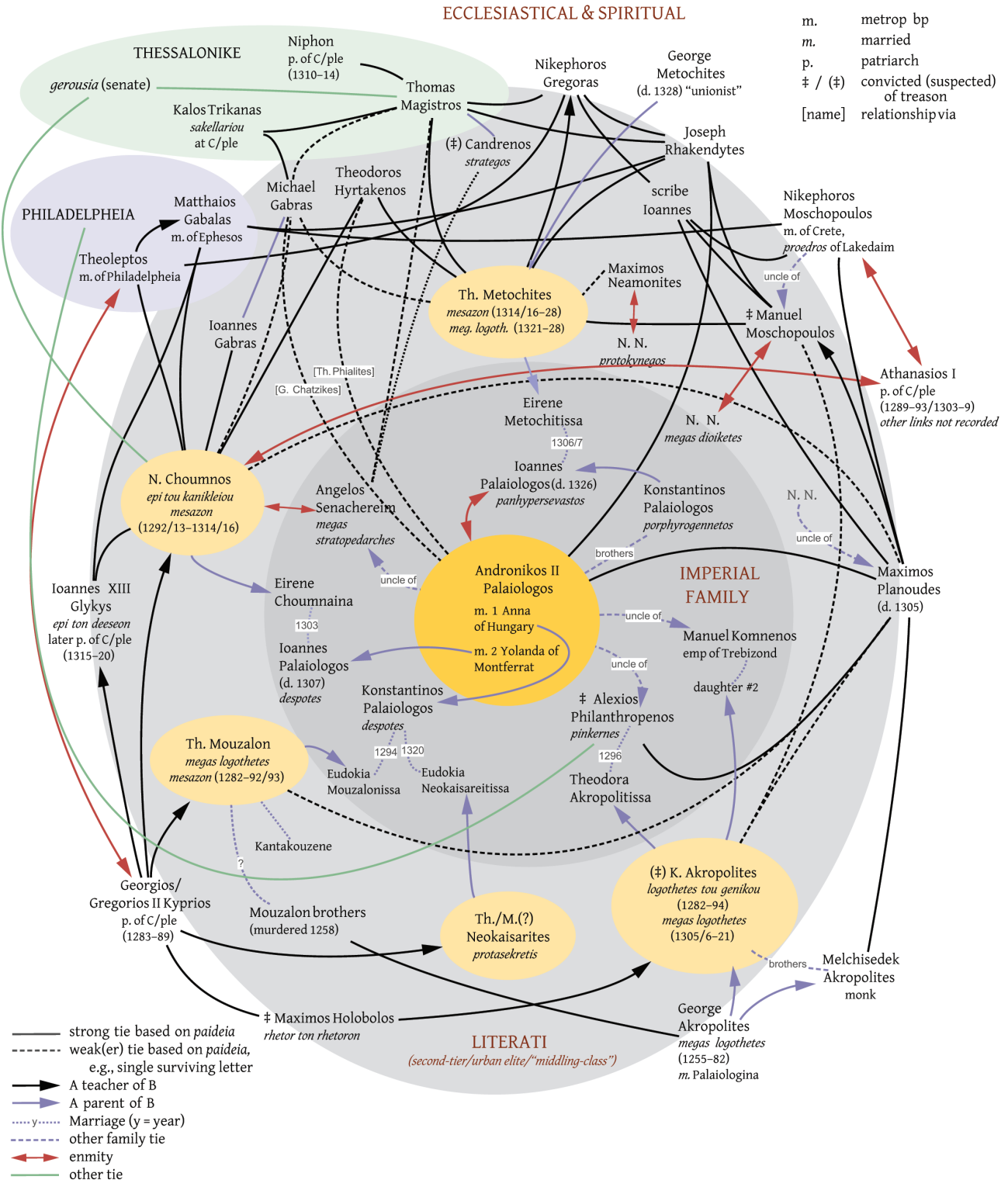


FIG. 2. Interaction of learned actors with the Palaiologoi and court aristocracy and ecclesiastical/spiritual figures, ca. 1282–1328. Selected actors/links simplified; direct links of the core actors and the emperor between each other are not recorded (drawing by author)

lost. The epistolary collection of Theodoros Metochites, perhaps the core actor wielding most influence with the emperor, famously perished in the Escorial in 1671.²² Of Theodoros Mouzalon's rhetorical compositions but a very few survive; a mere handful of his letters was included in Kyprios's *epistolarion*.²³ The lost *logoi* of young Manuel Neokaisareites are equally referred to in Kyprios's letters.²⁴ Konstantinos Akropolites, on the other hand, anonymized the far majority of his surviving 196 letters.²⁵ The thick web of personal encounters, especially in the daily morning and afternoon receptions (*parastaseis*) at the imperial court—where the core actors and other literati met, chatted, and quarreled almost every day of their adult lives²⁶—or in the

should think that, e.g., Nikephoros Choumnos replied to the numerous queries of Theodoros Hyrtakenos or the one surviving from the pen of Maximos Planoudes, he did not include a letter to either in his carefully edited collection: which allows valuable conclusions about the asymmetry informing such learned relationships.

22 G. de Andrés, *Catalogo de los codices griegos desaparecidos de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial* (El Escorial, 1968), 58 (no. 116) and 210 (no. 487).

23 A. E. Laiou, "The Correspondence of Gregorios Kyprios as a Source for the History of Social and Political Behavior in Byzantium or, On Government by Rhetoric," in *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. W. Seibt (Vienna, 1996), 91–108 at 98–99; Mouzalon's surviving œuvre is now newly edited by D. Samara, "Θεόδωρος Μουζάλων: βιοεργογραφική μελέτη" (Ph.D. diss., University of Thessalonike, 2014), 43–217.

24 C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1204–ca. 1310)*, 37: to me it seems a matter of Neokaisareites' œuvre being lost, rather than the latter having not been productive. Neokaisareites' sole surviving work seems to be a—still unpublished—hymn on the three hierarchs; cf. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἱεροσολυμιτική Βιβλιοθήκη*, 5 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1891–1915), 5:352. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this reference.

25 R. Romano, ed., *Costantino Acropolita, Epistole* (Naples, 1991), 31–57; Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 37. On Akropolites' collection see now S. Kotzabassi, "Reconsidering the Letters of Constantine Acropolites," in *Myriobiblos: Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, ed. T. Antonopoulou, S. Kotzabassi, and M. Loukaki (Boston and Berlin, 2015), 211–16.

26 R. Macrides, "Inside and Outside the Palace: Ceremonies in the Constantinople of the Palaiologoi," in *The Byzantine Court: Source of Power and Culture*, ed. A. Ödekan, N. Necipoğlu, and E. Akyürek (Istanbul, 2013), 165–70 at 166. Cf., e.g., Akropolites' ep. 59.6–14, ed. Romano, 153–54 and Choumnos's letter to the very Akropolites, asking the latter to convey his apologies to the emperor for missing the *parastasis* because of a fit of gout; J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca* (Paris, 1844; repr. Hildesheim, 1962), 99–100 (ep. 81); A. Riehle, "Funktionen der byzantinischen Epistolographie: Studien zu den

rhetorical *theatra* crisscrossing learned and aristocratic Constantinople,²⁷ is equally largely lost. Therefore, this essay shall not attempt to reconstruct a reliable inter-subjective network; its hypotheses inspired by network analytical tools must be tested otherwise.

A prosopographical prelude examines the social backgrounds of the six core actors mentioned above in order to firmly establish their originally middling-stratum backgrounds; readers with no specific interest in later Byzantine prosopography may wish to skip this section and move straight to the subsequent ones focusing on networking strategies. A survey of the nubile networks around the Palaiologos clan is followed by an analysis of the core nodes' fitness and the resulting preferential attachment of other literati to these core actors, before the concluding section examines the purpose and robustness of the network Andronikos II created.

Prosopographical Prelude: The Core Actors

When young Theodoros Metochites performed his enkomion on the city of Nicaea before Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, in 1290, "the impossible . . . happened."²⁸ The emperor, who was touring the

Briefen und Briefsammlungen des Nikephoros Choumnos (ca. 1260–1327)" (Ph.D. diss., LMU Munich, 2011), 100–103 and 161; idem, "Rhetorik, Ritual und Repräsentation: Zur Briefliteratur gebildeter Eliten im spätbyzantinischen Konstantinopel (1261–1328)," *FS* 45 (2011): 259–76 at 264. On the court see F. Schrijver, "The Early Palaiologan Court (1261–1354)" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2013).

27 I. Toth, "Rhetorical *Theatron* in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations," in *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. M. Grünbart (Berlin, 2007), 429–48; N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 17–53; idem, "Performative Reading in the Late Byzantine *Theatron*," in *World of a Myriad Books: Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. I. Toth and T. Shawcross (Cambridge, forthcoming); Riehle, "Rhetorik."

28 For the quote, I. Ševčenko, "Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the Intellectual Trends of His Time," in *The Kariye Djami: Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, ed. P. A. Underwood (Princeton, 1975), 26; cf. D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007), 163. On the Nikaeus, C. Foss, ed., *Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and Its Praises* (Brookline, MA, 1996) and recently A. Rhoby, "Theodoros Metochites' *Byzantios* and Other City Encomia of the 13th and 14th Centuries," in *Villes de toute beauté: L'ekphrasis des cités dans les littératures byzantine et byzantino-slaves*, ed. P. Odorico and C. Messis (Paris, 2012), 81–99. On Andronikos's 1290/91–93 progress to Asia Minor, see A. Laiou,

troubled eastern provinces of his realm for the second time (the first time as ruling emperor), seemingly moved by Metochites' performance, promoted the young man to the middle-ranking court dignity of *logothetes ton agelon*. It was the beginning of a, in the eyes of learned contemporaries, stunning career that culminated with the powerful positions of *mesazon*²⁹ (1314/16) and *megas logothetes* (1321), glories foreshadowed by the marriage of Metochites' daughter Eirene to the *panhypersebastos* Ioannes Palaiologos, the emperor's senior nephew,³⁰ shortly after 1305/6. Together with his predecessor in the office of *mesazon*, Nikephoros Choumnos, Metochites' is often referred to as the quintessential career a learned gentleman of middling-stratum background could hope to make in Byzantium. Metochites' father, Georgios, a vociferous supporter of the ill-fated 1274 union of Lyons, which ultimately cost him his career and freedom, had been archdeacon in the palace and *epi ton deeseon* in the Constantinopolitan patriarchate:³¹ well-to-do, but not aristocratic.

The just-mentioned Nikephoros Choumnos served Andronikos as *mesazon* from 1292/93; his daughter Eirene in turn married the *despotes* Ioannes Palaiologos, the eldest son from Andronikos II's second marriage, to Yolanda (Eirene) of Montferrat, in 1303. The cases of Metochites and Choumnos have often been looked at in tandem on accounts of

- their *backgrounds* (nonaristocratic);
- their significant rhetorical *œuvres* (testifying to their erudition in rhetorics, philosophy, and, in the case of Metochites, astronomy);

- their *careers* (holding, with *epi tou kanikleiou* and *megas logothetes* respectively, two "top-twenty" dignities while, as *mesazontes*, wielding real influence);
- their *family fortune* (propitious matches into the imperial family; subsequent inclusion of their—male—heirs into the aristocracy³²);
- and finally and perhaps most importantly, their famous controversy in 1323.³³

The two were favorites of an aging emperor renowned for his love of *paideia*,³⁴ who himself composed and performed rhetoric. Scholars judging their social status at the end of their careers rather than at the beginning have often classified them as aristocrats.

Yet it is exactly the focus on these two, combined with this tendency to perceive them—ex-post—as members of the aristocracy, which has to a certain degree obscured the view of the underlying pattern this essay explores. Choumnos was promoted to the position of *epi tou kanikleiou* and, more importantly, *mesazon* when the incumbent, Theodoros Mouzalon, fell seriously ill in the early 1290s while traveling through Asia Minor with the emperor; he died soon thereafter, in March 1294. Mouzalon presents one of the many problematic cases of late Byzantine prosopography.³⁵ The name, Mouzalon, was tied to the reign of emperor Theodoros II Laskaris (r. 1254–58),³⁶ whose 1255 attempt to establish a ministerial service gentry from nonaristocratic background, dependent on his favor, went far beyond any previous, or later, attempts. Hand

Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 76–79; it is also the topic of Metochites' second imperial oration: I. Polemis, ed., *Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης: Οἱ δύο βασιλικοί λόγοι* (Athens, 2007), 42–59.

29 The *mesazon* was a trusted courtier actually running the government independently of his exact rank in the court hierarchy. See H.-G. Beck, "Der byzantinische Ministerpräsident," *BZ* 48 (1955): 309–18; J. Verpeaux, "Contribution à l'étude de l'administration byzantine: ὁ μεσάζων," *BSI* 16 (1955): 270–96; N. Oikonomidès, "La chancellerie impériale de Byzance du 13e au 15e siècle," *REB* 43 (1985): 167–195; R.-J. Loenertz, "Le chancelier impérial à Byzance au XIV^e et au XIII^e siècle," *OCP* 26 (1960): 275–300.

30 Son of Andronikos II's "purple-born" brother Konstantinos; cf. Pach. 12.20. It remains unclear why Konstantinos on his deathbed dissociated himself from his son (Pach. 11.22 [4:467.10–13]).

31 *PLP* 17979.

32 Cf. Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy" (n. 1 above), 348–49 and n. 185.

33 See I. Ševčenko, *Études sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Choumnos: La vie intellectuelle et politique sous les premiers Paléologues* (Brussels, 1962), with the corrections provided by Riehle, "Funktionien," 13–40.

34 E.g., Greg. 8.8; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 111. On learning—in Greek, *paideia*—see n. 77 below.

35 See E. Trapp, "Probleme der Prosopographie der Palaiologenzzeit," *JÖB* 27 (1978): 181–201 at 199–200.

36 Theodoros Laskaris remains a curiously understudied figure; however, recent and current work promises remedy. See D. G. Angelov, "The 'Moral Pieces' by Theodore II Laskaris," *DOP* 65–66 (2011–12): 237–69 and his current project, *The Byzantine Hellene: Theodore Laskaris and the Transformation of Byzantine Culture in Exile* (forthcoming); and P. Koutouvalas, "Οι επιστολές του Θεόδωρου Β' Δούκα Λάσκαρη: Προσέγγιση της λογοτεχνικής φαινομενολογίας του αυτοκράτορα" (Ph.D. diss., University of Athens, 2014).

in hand with promoting a group of five “middlemen”—the brothers Georgios and Andronikos Mouzalon, Ioannes Angelos, one Karyanites, and Georgios Akropolites³⁷—Laskaris humiliated and purged the aristocracy “by birth,” especially those noble men whom his father, Ioannes III Vatatzes, had trusted.³⁸ As a result, all members of this group but one had to pay with their lives following Theodoros II’s untimely death in 1258.

The intriguing question arises whether Theodoros Mouzalon, whose career accelerated late in Michael VIII Palaiologos’s reign, in 1277, when he was pulled out of military service and promoted to the dignity of *logothetes tou genikou* and the position of *mesazon*,³⁹ was a relation of the Mouzalon brothers butchered at Sosandra in 1258.⁴⁰ Demetra Samara suggests that he was, in fact, the offspring of Georgios Mouzalon’s short marriage to Theodora Raoulaina; this is possible, given the high ranks he was to reach certainly plausible, but remains—strictly speaking—hypothetical.⁴¹ Contemporary sources, while praising

Mouzalon’s erudition, are suspiciously silent about his background. Yet Georgios Pachymeres, an astute observer of the early Palaiologan elite, at least linked his fate with Konstantinos Akropolites’. Pachymeres’ parallel treatment of both may indicate that he thought them members of the same group; his silence about Mouzalon’s background supports the assumed connection to the Mouzalones of 1258.⁴² For, Konstantinos Akropolites’ father Georgios, *megas logothetes* under Michael VIII and closely joined to the Mouzalon brothers, as Macrides convincingly argues, had himself been a *homo novus* at the court of Theodoros II Laskaris. Desperately trying to disentangle himself from his non-aristocratic peers promoted under Theodoros II at the expense of the established aristocracy, he betrayed his own background. “Akropolites belongs to this group of five more than he wants his readers to know,” Macrides concluded, “[h]e was . . . neither more noble, nor more able than the four men with whom he was promoted”: notably, Georgios Akropolites was the only of the five to survive the purge of 1258 unharmed.⁴³ Both were linked to leading aristocratic families. Judging by the lack of genealogical information offered by the sources though, both the Eudokia (Palaiologina) whom Konstantinos Akropolites’ father Georgios had been

37 Akrop. § 60 (124.1–18). Cf. R. Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History* (Oxford, 2007), 24–28.

38 Akrop. § 75 (154.20–155.10); Pach. 1.8 (1:41.4–43.3). The names given are Theodoros Philes (blinded); Alexios Strategopoulos (imprisoned) and his son Konstantinos (blinded); the *megas primikerios* Konstantinos Tornikes (blinded); Georgios Zagarommates and the four sons of the *protobestiarios* Raoul (imprisoned); the *epi tou kanikleiou* Nikephoros Alyates (tongue cut out), “as well as many other capable and notable men” (ἄλλοι τε πολλοὶ τῶν χρησίμων καὶ ὀνομαστῶν ἀνδρῶν, Akrop. 155.9–10). See Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 293–98.

39 Pach. 6.26 (2:625.18–20); cf. below n. 42.

40 A. Kazhdan, “Mouzalon,” *ODB* 2:1420–21 assumes that Theodoros was Georgios’s elder brother (τῷ πρώτῳ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφῷ, Akrop. § 75 [155.18]), the *protokyngos*, whose Christian name only Gregoras transmits—“très probablement à tort,” says Failler, *Georges Pachymérés* (n. 4 above), 1:40 n. 6—and whom Akrop. reckons among those killed; D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London, 1968), 148 thinks of a son; Failler, *Georges Pachymérés*, 1:40 n. 6 initially more vaguely “qui appartient à la génération suivante,” but *ibid.* 5:36 “fils de George.” *PLP* 19439 remains silent on the issue.

41 Samara, “Θεόδωρος Μουζάλων” (n. 23 above), 21–23. Her *argumentum ex silentio* is based mostly on the observation that the sources remain silent about Mouzalon’s pedigree and that he received preferment from Michael VIII late in his reign. Samara suggests that Mouzalon was brought up at court as the emperor’s ward, together with young Andronikos (II) and with young Konstantinos Akropolites, after Michael had married his cousin Theodora to the *protobestiarios* Raul. Convincingly, she further points at Mouzalon’s

proximity to both Theodora Raoulaina’s protégé, Gregorios Kyprios (*ibid.*, 25–27), and Raoulaina herself (*ibid.*, 29–32, 40–41) later in life.

42 Pach. 6.26 (2:625.14–627.11), in the chapter titled “Events concerning the *logothetes tou genikou*, Mouzalon” (τὰ κατὰ τὸν λογοθέτην τοῦ γενικοῦ Μουζάλων). The following quote 2:625.15–20: “This happened to plenty of others; it also happened to Konstantinos Akropolites and Theodoros Mouzalon, the first of whom, when he [Michael VIII] had received him from his father the *megas logothetes* [Georgios Akropolites], he raised by educating him and making him one of his closest *oikeioi*; the other, once he had pulled him from the armed ranks and ordered him to immerse himself in studies, he honoured as *logothetes ton genikon*, giving him as his wife the daughter of Kantakouzenos, and made use of as mediator of the common affairs [= *mesazon*]” (τοῦτο ξυνέβη καὶ ἄλλοις πλείστοις, ξυμβεβήκει δὲ καὶ Κωνσταντίνῳ τε τῷ Ἀκροπολίτῃ καὶ τῷ Θεοδώρῳ Μουζάλωνι, ὧν τὸν μὲν, παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ μεγάλου λογοθέτου λαβὼν, ἀνῆγε παιδεύων καὶ οἰκεῖον ἀποκαθιστῶν ἐς ὅτι μάλιστα, τὸν δέ, ἐκ στρατιωτικῆς μοίρας ἀναλαβὼν καὶ τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἐνδοῦς ἐνσχολάσαι, λογοθέτην τε τῶν γενικῶν ἐτίμα, συζεύξας εἰς γυναῖκά οἱ καὶ τὴν τοῦ Καντακουζηνοῦ θυγατέρα, καὶ μεσίτη τῶν κοινῶν ἐχράτο).

43 Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 26. In addition to his family connection he was imprisoned in Epiros at the time and returned to the then Palaiologan court only after things had calmed down.

married to⁴⁴—by Theodoros II—and the “daughter of Kantakouzenos” betrothed to Theodoros Mouzalon by Michael VIII in the 1270s were rather distant members of their respective families.⁴⁵

Theodoros Mouzalon's career continued to the dignities of *megas logothetes* and *protobestiarios*.⁴⁶ Most indicatively, his daughter Eudokia was married to Andronikos II's second son, the *despotes* Konstantinos—after the emperor's intention to marry her to his own youngest brother, Theodoros, had failed.⁴⁷ Konstantinos Akropolites on the other hand, while finally inheriting the dignity of *megas logothetes*, which his father Georgios had held, in 1294 from Theodoros Mouzalon, was not to achieve the influential position of *mesazon* which had just passed

to Nikephoros Choumnos. Akropolites' firstborn daughter was wed to the *pinkernes* Alexios Philanthropenos, a more distant yet at the time highly promising nephew of Andronikos II, in 1294.⁴⁸ Both Konstantinos Akropolites and Theodoros Mouzalon, if the latter was indeed the offspring of one of the unfortunate Mouzalones who flourished under Theodoros II Laskaris, and possibly of Georgios Mouzalon himself, represented the second generation of learned courtiers of middling-stratum background whose careers had commenced under Laskaris and continued under Palaiologos and Andronikos II.

Finally, the *protasekretis* Manuel Neokaisareites and the *megas logariastes* Konstantinos Kokalas constitute prosopographically puzzling cases: from the fact that young Neokaisareites' learning was frequently praised one can safely include him in this sample group of literati.⁴⁹ Next to nothing is known about Kokalas's background:⁵⁰ from the fact that the name is not well attested and none of its holders seems to boast an aristocratic background, a middling-stratum learned, perhaps Thessalonian background may be inferred.⁵¹ Among the core actors, his dignity ranked lowest by far.

Certain patterns emerge:

- All core actors were allowed to marry at least one daughter to prominent male members of the Palaiologos clan, including two sons of the ruling emperor (marrying a total of three daughters; table 1, nos. 1, 3, 6) and three first-degree nephews (table 1, nos. 2b, 4, 5): a pattern too recurrent to be random. Contingent factors need to be taken into account; for instance, Andronikos was blessed with five sons from his two wives, Anna of Hungary and Yolanda of Montferrat,

44 Akrop. § 79 (164.19–21) and Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 17–18; *PLP* 6226 omits her family name as not explicitly attested in the sources.

45 Pach. 6.26 (2:625.20, τὴν τοῦ Καντακουζηνοῦ θυγατέρα; cf. n. 42 above). D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus): Ca. 1100–1460* (Washington, DC, 1968), 25–26 (no. 18) and R. Guiland, “Les logothètes: Études sur l'histoire administrative de l'Empire byzantin,” *REB* 29 (1971): 5–115 at 107 assume that this “daughter of Kantakouzenos” was a fifth, otherwise unknown daughter of Ioannes Kantakouzenos Komnenos Angelos (d. before 1257) with Michael VIII's sister Eirene/Eulogia Palaiologina; in which case Theodoros Mouzalon would have been married to a sister of his (uncle or possibly even father) Georgios Mouzalon's widow, Theodora Palaiologina Kantakouzene—later Raoulaina, and patroness of Nikephoros Choumnos—i.e., a niece of Michael VIII and presumably by a few years Mouzalon's senior: not impossible but perhaps unlikely. Furthermore, Pachymeres described Theodora Raoulaina variably as “Theodora from the Kantakouzenoi, who was [Michael] Palaiologos's niece” (τὴν ἐκ Καντακουζηνῶν Θεοδώραν, τοῦ Παλαιολόγου οὖσαν ἀδελφιδὴν, Pach. 1.8 [1:41.10–11]) or “Theodora of the *protobestiarios* [Georgios] Mouzalon, recently widowed in the manner that was narrated, who was his [Michael VIII's] niece, a daughter of his own sister Eulogia by Kantakouzenos” (τῇ τοῦ πρωτοβεστιρίου Μουζάλωνος, πρὸ μικροῦ χρηωθείση τρόπον ὃς εἴρηται, Θεοδώρα, ἀδελφιδὴ αὐτοῦ γε οὖσα, Εὐλογίας ἐκ Καντακουζηνοῦ θυγατρί τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀνταδέλφης, Pach. 2.13 [1:155.2–4]). While the phrases τὴν ἐκ Καντακουζηνῶν, ἐκ Καντακουζηνοῦ θυγατρί, and τὴν τοῦ Καντακουζηνοῦ θυγατέρα may be comparable, the fact that Theodora is always referred to by her Christian name and consistently identified as Michael Palaiologos's niece while Theodoros Mouzalon's wife is not, makes it somewhat unlikely that the latter was Theodora's (younger) sister.

46 Pach. 8.1 (3:19.18–19) says that Michael VIII promoted Mouzalon to the dignity of *megas logothetes* after Georgios Akropolites' death; at Pach. 8.18 (3:171.5–7) he is additionally granted the dignity of *protobestiarios*.

47 Table 1, no. 1 and table 2, nos. 2 and 4.

48 Table 1, no. 2a and table 2, no. 23.

49 S. Eustratiades, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Κυπρίου ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ μῦθοι* (Alexandria, 1910), passim, especially *ep.* 16: τό . . . τῆς γνώμης φιλόσοφον. . . ὁ ῥήτωρ σὺν. . . All letters Kyprios sent to Neokaisareites predate the former's elevation to the patriarchate in March 1283—cf. W. Lameere, *La tradition manuscrite de la correspondance de Grégoire de Chypre, patriarche de Constantinople (1283–1289)* (Brussels, 1937), 197–203 and 215–18—and thus address the young Neokaisareites at the very beginning of his career. Letters to him are consistently superscribed τῷ Νεοκαισαρείτῃ without any title.

50 Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 123–24. See below, p. 269 and n. 149.

51 Table 1, no. 6.

Table 1. The Emperor's Learned Men, the marriages of their daughters, and challenges to Andronikos II's rule

	Learned Men	Known or assumed social background	Cursus honorum
1	Theodoros Mouzalon <i>PLP</i> 19439 ante-1258–March 1294	middling-class; second (?) generation social climber	military service (prior to 1277) <i>logothetes tou genikou</i> (1277–82) <i>megas logothetes</i> (1282–94) <i>protobestiarios</i> (1290–94) <i>mesazon</i> (1277–92/3)
2	Konstantinos Akropolites <i>PLP</i> 520 ca. 1250/55–ante-May 1324	middling-class; second- generation social climber	<i>logothetes tou genikou</i> (1282–94) <i>megas logothetes</i> (1294–1321)
3	Nikephoros Choumnos <i>PLP</i> 30961 ca. 1260–1327	middling-class; first-generation social climber	<i>koiaistor</i> (ante-1286) <i>mystikos</i> (1292/3) <i>epi tou kanikleiou</i> (1295–1327) <i>mesazon</i> (1292/93–1314/16)
4	Theodoros Metochites <i>PLP</i> 17982 1270–1332	middling-class; first-generation social climber	<i>logothetes ton agelon</i> (1290–95/96) <i>logothetes ton oikeiakon</i> (1295/96–1305) <i>logothetes tou genikou</i> (1305–21) <i>megas logothetes</i> (1321–28) <i>mesazon</i> (1314/16–28)
5	Konstantinos (?) Kokalas <i>PLP</i> 14086/88 fl. 1304/9–27	presumably not aristocratic “by birth”; possibly from Thessalonike	<i>megas logariastes</i> (1327)
6	Manuel (?) Neokaisareites <i>PLP</i> 20091/94 b. ca. 1260?	middling-class; social climber (?)	<i>protasekretis</i> (ca. 1280s–1320s?)

P. = *Palaiologina/Palaiologos*; *T*₂ = table 2

Marriage arranged by Andronikos:

certainly	probably	possibly	likely not
A. Pach. 8.18 (3:171.2–3), 8.19 (29 June 1292 – March 1293); 8.29 (March 1294); Greg. 6.6.5 (1:190.4–191.2).			
B. Pach. 9.9–12. Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 317–19.			
C. Pach. 9.15. The earthquake prompted a short-lived judicial reform.			
D. Pach. 9.13 (4:435.1–14) and 9.19. Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 320–23.			
E. Pach. 13.15. See A. Failler, “Le complot antidynastique de Jean Drimys,” <i>REB</i> 54 (1996): 235–44 and table 2, no. 20: Theodoros Synadenos was Mouzakios's son-in-law.			
F. Pach. 13.24. Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 326–27.			

#1. Theodoros Mouzalon was most likely the son of one of the murdered Mouzalon brothers, cf. n. 41: he had an infant son in the 1280s (S. Kotzabassi, “Notes on Letter 60 of Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus,” *Medioevo Greco* 11 [2011]: 139–44); his daughter Eudokia was of marriageable age in the early 1290s, had apparently already engaged in an illicit affair, and her husband was born 1279–81/82. Slightly older (b. ca. 1263) was another potential husband, Theodoros Palaiologos, (table 2, no. 2), Andronikos II's brother, but doubts about her integrity thwarted that marriage; see Pach. 8.26 (3:201.19–33). The marriage with

Konstantinos was concluded after Mouzalon's death, in spring 1294 (Pach. 8.26 [3:201.33–203.5] and 8.31).

- #2. On Theodora's marriage see Pach. 9.9 (3:241.19–20); Beyer, “Chronologie,” 125–27. The date of the other daughter's marriage is not recorded; see Nicol, “Constantine Acropolites,” 253. As Andronikos II could only in mid-1301 be certain of Alexios II Komnenos's definite refusal to marry Choumnaina (Pach. 10.7 [4:319.6–15]), I suppose that the marriage of Akropolites' younger daughter to Alexios's younger brother postdates this event, unless one assumes that Andronikos had pursued both projects independently, and considered marrying both brothers to middling-stratum daughters. It might possibly even postdate the Choumnaina's marriage in 1303, if one assumes that Andronikos prioritized the Choumnos case. On the other hand he may have considered Michael Komnenos a suitable match for Akropolites' daughter but not Choumnos's daughter, to whom he had already sent the attire of a *basilissa* = wife of a *despotes* (ibid. 317.17–19: ἐξ τόνον δ' ἐφήρμοσσε τὴν βουλὴν τῇ πράξει ὥστε καὶ αὐτόθεν δεσποτικοὺς παρασήμοις τὴν κόρην ἐκόσμει καὶ νύμφην ὠνόμαζε and 319.15–16). Akropolitissa's marriage may thus have predated Eirene Choumnaina's after all.
- #3. On Choumnos's *cursus honorum* see Riehle, “Funktionieren,” 340–42. His dignity of *koiaistor* oscillates remarkably in the lists of precedence. On the marriage, Pach. 11.5; see above, #2, for chronology.
- #4. On the marriage of Eirene see Greg. 7.11 (1:271.2–21); Kant. 1.43 (1:209.4–8). Ševčenko, *Études*, 149–50 suggested a date of 1305/6,

Marriages of Daughters			
Name	Date	Acquired title	Husband
A	1292/93—Alleged rebellion of Konstantinos <i>Porphyrogennetos</i> and Michael Strategopoulos		
Eudokia <i>PLP</i> 91886	shortly (?) after March 1294	<i>basilissa</i>	Konstantinos P. (= <i>T</i> ₂ #4; first marriage; cf. #6)
Theodora <i>PLP</i> 7295/29743	summer 1294	<i>pinkernissa</i>	Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos (cf. #B; = <i>T</i> ₂ #23)
B	1295—Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos's rebellion in Asia Minor		
C	17 July 1296—Earthquake		
anonymous younger daughter	1301/2 (or later?)	none attested	Michael Komnenos (cf. <i>T</i> ₂ #17)
D	1303—trouble with the <i>despotes</i> Michael Angelos		
Eirene <i>PLP</i> 30936 1291—ca. 1354/55	April 1303	<i>basilissa</i>	Ioannes P. (= <i>T</i> ₂ #5)
E	1305—rebellions of Ioannes Drimys; the <i>domestikos ton scholon</i> Katelanos and the <i>epi tou stratou</i> Mouzakios		
F	1306—attempted rebellion of the <i>megas primmikerios</i> Kassianos		
Eirene <i>PLP</i> 5972	1307/8–1312/13 (?)	<i>panhypersebaste</i> , finally <i>kaisarissa</i>	Ioannes P. (= <i>T</i> ₂ #8)
anonymous daughter	unknown	<i>protobestiaria</i>	Andronikos P. (= <i>T</i> ₂ #10)
Eudokia <i>PLP</i> 21369	unknown	unknown	Konstantinos P. (d. ante-1320?) <i>PLP</i> 21490 (perhaps = <i>PLP</i> 21489)
	ca. 1320, or slightly earlier	<i>basilissa</i>	Konstantinos P. (= <i>T</i> ₂ #4; second marriage; cf. #1)

shortly after Metochites' presumed return from Thessalonike, in accordance with his idea that the *mesastikion* passed from Choumnos to Metochites around that time. However, since this latter transition took place considerably later (Riehle, "Funktionen," 13–26) and the marriage is not mentioned by Pachymeres, who followed events until summer 1307 and, given his previous coverage of the *panhypersebastos* (12.20), might well have been interested in it, I am inclined to assume a slightly later date. As the *panhypersebastos* was "almost seventeen" in early 1305, a marriage ca. 1307/8 seems feasible. The *terminus ante quem* is ca. 1312/13, see Ševčenko, *Études*, 149.

#5. Pace Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 123–24, I am rather inclined to identify the *megas logariastes* with the Konstantinos Kokalas attested in Thessalonike for the year 1320; J. Lefort, ed., *Actes d'Iviron*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1985–90), 3:76.240. In this case the *megas adnoumiastes* Georgios Kokalas attested in 1336 (*PLP* 92485) may have been his son. As for our Konstantinos Kokalas (#4), there is no way of determining when his daughter's marriage took place.

#6. I am inclined to believe that the *protasekretis* Theodoros Neokaisareites (*PLP* 20091), attested only by a later hand in MS Laur. 56.3 on fol. 70r—ἐπιτάφιοι εἰς τὴν Παλαιολογίναν Θεοδώρου τοῦ πρωτασηκρήτις τοῦ Νεοκαισαρείτου, ἐτι ζῶσαν τούτους γραφῆναι ζητήσαν— and listed by the *PLP* as Eudokia's father, is a prosopographical hoax (or perhaps a monastic name?) and that the slightly better attested *protasekretis* Manuel Neokaisareites (*PLP*

20094) was Eudokia's "real" father. However, the prosopographical evidence is overall slim. Pachymeres attests a *protasekretis* Michael Neokaisareites (*PLP* 20096) for the year 1274—cf. n. 58—who delivered Michael VIII's post-Lyons chrysobull to the church of Constantinople and may have been Manuel's father; another Michael Neokaisareites (*PLP* 20095), addressee of Michael Gabras and traceable as *apographeus* between 1319 and 1324 and as *megas adnoumiastes* in 1325, may have been Manuel's brother or son. In the latter case, the family may have run Michael–Manuel–Michael in the male line. Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 37 assumes that our Manuel Neokaisareites (#6) held the office of *protasekretis* already before March 1283 while being the addressee of Georgios/Gregorios Kyprios; however, given that Neokaisareites seems to have been of roughly the same age as Choumnos—Kyprios's *ep.* 57, ed. Eustratiades, addressed to both and referring to them as κακόπαιδας might suggest as much—this is unlikely and explains why Kyprios does not accord him any title: Choumnos received his first dignity in his mid-twenties, in 1286 (see Riehle, "Funktionen," 340). Two letters by Konstantinos Akropolites from the 1290s (*epp.* 5 and 18, ed. Romano, 111 and 118–19) were addressed to a *protasekretis* (hypothetically) identified with Manuel, and Gregoras refers to Eudokia as θυγάτηρ . . . Νεοκαισαρείτου τοῦ πρωτασηκρήτις (8.3 [1:293, 15–16]). Cf. Matschke und Tinnfeld, *Gesellschaft*, 33–34. On the marriage of Eudokia, see Greg. 8.3 (1:293.12–294.20).

and only one legitimate daughter.⁵² Yet female members of the extended Palaiologos clan would presumably have been available if the emperor had so intended,⁵³ and closer to the inherited model.⁵⁴

- While it remains to be seen whether *paideia* was the sole criterion of their careers or metonymically denoted additional qualities,⁵⁵ learning certainly facilitated the core actors' advancement and was—in a highly performative society—frequently singled out for praise by other literati. Mouzalon, Choumnos, and Neokaisareites were—at different times between 1272/73 and 1282—disciples of the Georgios/Gregorios Kyprios (patriarch 1283–89); Choumnos succeeded to the *mesastikion* at Mouzalon's express recommendation.⁵⁶
- Three of them (Mouzalon, Choumnos, Metochites) became *mesazontes* effectively supervising government affairs. At the same time near-hereditary career patterns emerged: Konstantinos Akropolites' father Georgios may have been the first to hold the offices of *logothetes tou genikou* and *megas logothetes* in succession; this path was subsequently followed by Mouzalon, Akropolites' own son Konstantinos, and Theodoros Metochites.⁵⁷
- While two or three of the five were presumably social climbers in the second generation (Mouzalon, Akropolites, Neokaisareites⁵⁸), two appear to have been social climbers in the first

generation (Choumnos, Metochites). Certainly the sons of Choumnos and Metochites, for whom there is sufficient prosopographical evidence, subsequently became established members of the late Byzantine aristocracy, although Choumnos perceptively remarked that sons rarely climbed as high as their fathers.⁵⁹ Four of them hastened to document their newly acquired aristocratic status by (re)founding, or connecting themselves with, monasteries: Mouzalon was involved with a Tornikios family monastery in Nicaea while the Akropolites and Choumnos families endowed houses in Constantinople; Metochites, with the emperor's support and encouragement, restored the Chora monastery in the years following his elevation to the *mesastikion* (1316–21).⁶⁰

The five formed a close-knit group with multiple connections among each other and they partially shared sponsors behind them; controversies emerged rarely and late, and were—with the exception of the 1323 controversy—kept low.

“You, My Child, Pursue the Loving Deeds of Wedlock”: Palaiologan Marriage Networks

How do these six cases relate to the wider current of Palaiologan marriage policies? Networking strategies of the main branch of the Palaiologoi in the first three generations in power, starting with Michael VIII and his siblings via Andronikos II to the latter's children,

52 Simonis (*PLP* 21398), infamously married to the Serbian *kralj* Stephen Uroš Milutin at age five: Pach. 9.31 (3:303.14–35).

53 Such as the daughters of Ioannes Asanes (*PLP* 1501) and Eirene Asanina Palaiologina (*PLP* 21359), Theodora (*PLP* 1531) and Maria (*PLP* 16890), who were given to the *megas stratopedarches* Manuel Tagaris (*PLP* 27400) and Roger de Flor (m. ca. 1303) and, subsequently, Ferran Ximenes de Arenos (m. ca. 1307) respectively.

54 Above, nn. 8 and 14.

55 In network terminology, the nodes' respective fitness, see below n. 71.

56 Pach. 8.20 (3:183.10–14); cf. n. 90 below. Riehle, “Funktionen” (n. 26 above) 118–19 suggests there may have been a family connection between them.

57 Guillard, “Les logothètes,” 106–8; Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 21.

58 If his father was indeed the *protasekretis* Michael Neokaisareites attested in 1274 (Pach. 5:20 [2.505.21–22]); if so, the succession of *protasekretis* from 1259 may have been Michael Kakos

Senachereim; Michael Neokaisareites; the latter's son, Manuel Neokaisareites.

59 Gaul, *Thomas Magistros* (n. 27 above), 70–71; Choumnos can be seen lobbying on behalf of his children toward the end of his life. See Riehle, “Funktionen,” 40 and 287–88. On the Choumnos family in general, see J. Verpeaux, “Notes prosopographiques sur la famille Choumnos,” *BSI* 20 (1959): 252–66.

60 Mouzalon: Pach. 8.31 (3:215.15–17). Metochites: Ševčenko, “Theodore Metochites” (n. 28 above); H. A. Klein, R. G. Ousterhout, and B. Pitarakis, eds., *Kariye Camii, Yeniden—The Kariye Camii Reconsidered* (Istanbul, 2011); and V. Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel, 1204–1320* (Wiesbaden, 1994), 19–25. Konstantinos Akropolites styled himself as cofounder of father's Anastasis monastery (Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 5–8 and *BMFD* 4:1374–82) while Choumnos furnished the Gorgoepekoos monastery (Kidonopoulos, *Bauten*, 74–76) and retired to his daughter's convent of Christ Philanthropos Soter (ibid., 33–36 and *BMFD* 4:1383–88) which Eirene had established after the *despotes* Ioannes' early death.

may be briefly summarized as follows (fig. 1).⁶¹ In the first generation, of Michael VIII and his siblings, the emperor aimed at consolidating an extended aristocratic family clan⁶² designed to bring the Palaiologoi to, and more importantly keep them in, power, in clever contrast to the Laskarides' increasing isolation.⁶³ Second-generation descendants of these matches were frequently referred to as "nephews of the emperor" (or later, in Andronikos III's case, "uncles") and came to occupy the majority of high-ranking dignities associated with military duties.⁶⁴ In the next generation, of Andronikos II and his siblings, this network was widened to the competing "dynasties of exile," the Angeloi in the Epiros region and the Komnenoi at Trebizond, as well as—through the heir to the throne, as customary by the time⁶⁵—to "Latin" powers prepared to enter into matrimonial alliances: the Anjou threat was still viable.⁶⁶ In the third generation, of Andronikos II's children, with the Palaiologan grasp on power still somewhat insecure and repeatedly challenged externally and internally, powers closer to Byzantium—Cilician Armenia, through the eldest son and heir to the throne Michael (IX), and, at that time more threatening than the Anjou, the Serbs, through Andronikos II's only legitimate daughter, Simonis—and the second-tier-elite literati families here discussed were included.

From a more detailed survey of Andronikos II's eligible brothers, sons, and nephews, interesting details can be gleaned. Not all of Andronikos II's match-making attempts proved immediately successful; in at least two cases—Eudokia Mouzalonissa and Eirene Choumnaina—the first-choice groom managed to

elude the proposed match. The emperor's youngest brother, Theodoros, capitalized on doubts regarding the Mouzalonissa's integrity and married the more aristocratic Libadaria; Andronikos's nephew and ward Alexios Komnenos, heir to the Trapezuntine throne, shunned his uncle and guardian's wish to marry the Choumnaina.⁶⁷ At the same time Andronikos II's keen interest in concluding, or the pressure on him to conclude, these alliances becomes obvious; on both occasions he arranged for an alternative marriage as soon as possible—the Choumnaina's case was three years in the making;⁶⁸ in the Mouzalonissa's case, her father did not live to see the bond concluded.⁶⁹ In both cases this resulted in an "upgrade," in the sense that those who could offer least resistance were, presumably, the emperor's own sons.⁷⁰ The marriage of the younger Akropolitissa to the Trapezuntine prince Michael may, in this light, well have amounted to a compensation for the 1294 marriage of Akropolites' elder daughter with the disgraced *pinkernes* Philanthropenos; alternatively, if the match between Theodora Akropolitissa and Philanthropenos had come about without the emperor's mediation, the later marriage may have been designed to tie the Akropolitai closer to the core Palaiologoi.

At times Andronikos must have been anxious for eligible male youths of his family to reach the required minimum age of fourteen.

The Core Actors' Fitness

What then constituted the core actors' fitness—"some intrinsic property propelling [each of them] to the head of the pack"⁷¹—in the eyes of the emperor? It has already been suggested that learning was at the heart of it; one also needed to thrive in the "government of rhetoric" that had been consciously revived and fostered in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁷² Yet against

61 See the excellent sketch by Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy" (n. 1 above), 224–30. See also F. Dölger, "Die dynastische Familienpolitik des Kaisers Michael Palaeologos," in *Παράσπορα* (Ettal, 1961), 178–88; T. Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen, 1259–1453* (Munich, 1938; repr. Amsterdam, 1962); and, of course, *PLP*. On the quotation in the title of this section, see *Il.* 5.429: τέκνον ἐμὸν . . . ἀλλὰ σὺ γ' ἱμερόεντα μετέρχαιο ἔργα γάμοιο.

62 Including the Branades, Kantakouzenoi, Philanthropenoi, Raoul, Senachereim, Synadenoi, Tarchanciotai, Tornikai, etc.; cf. Pachymeres' ἡ μεγαλογενής σειρὰ καὶ χρυσῇ (1.21 [1:93.14–15]).

63 Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 219–24.

64 Table 2, nos. 18–26.

65 Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 228–29.

66 Laiou, *Constantinople* (n. 28 above); A. Kontogiannopoulou, *Η εσωτερική πολιτική του Ανδρονίκου Β' Παλαιολόγου (1282–1328). Διοίκηση—οικονομία* (Thessalonike, 2004).

67 Table 2, nos. 2 and 16.

68 Pach. 10.7 predates the emperor's return from Thessalonike to Constantinople in late November 1300; Pach. 11.5 dates to April 1303.

69 Pach. 8.26 (3:203.2–4): οὔτε μὴν ὁ πρωτοβεστιάριος ζῶν εἶδε τοὺς γάμους, ἀλλ' ἐν ἐλπίσι μόναις καὶ προσδοκίαις ἐτελεύτα τὸν βίον.

70 Table 2, nos. 4 and 5.

71 Barabási, *Linked* (n. 7 above), 93–107, quote at 95.

72 R. Macrides, "The New Constantine and the New Constantinople—1261?" *BMGS* 6 (1980): 13–41; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology* (n. 28 above), 29–51; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros* (n. 27 above), 1–4 and 272–81.

Table 2. The Emperor's Nephews, Sons, and Brothers

	Name	Highest dignity achieved during Andronikos II's rule ^a	Relation to Andronikos II
<i>Brothers</i>			
1	Konstantinos P., <i>porphyrogennetos</i> 1261 – May 1304 <i>PLP</i> 21492	none, yet considered as “superior to <i>despotai</i> ” with an income of 60,000 nomismata per annum ⁱ	younger brother
2	Theodoros K. P. ca. 1263 – post-1310 <i>PLP</i> 21464	none; refused the dignity of <i>sebastokrator</i> ; known as “the emperor's brother” ⁱⁱⁱ	youngest brother
<i>Sons</i>			
3	Michael (IX) D. A. K. P. April 1278 – 1320 <i>PLP</i> 21529	emperor (1294–1320)	eldest son, first marriage
4	Konstantinos D. K. P. 1279–81/82–1334/35 <i>PLP</i> 21499	<i>despotes</i> (1294–1334/35)	younger son, first marriage
5	Ioannes P. 1286–1307 <i>PLP</i> 21475	<i>despotes</i>	eldest son, second marriage
6	Theodoros K. D. A. P. 1291 – April 1338 <i>PLP</i> 21465	margrave ^{vii}	middle son, second marriage
7	Demetrios A. D. P. ca. 1295 – post-1340 <i>PLP</i> 21456	<i>despotes</i> (1306)	youngest son, second marriage
<i>First-degree nephews</i>			
8	Ioannes P. ca. 1288/89 – 1326 <i>PLP</i> 21479	<i>panhypersebastos</i> ^{viii} (March 1305–1325/26), briefly <i>*kaisar</i> ³	“premier nephew”: son of no. 1 with Eirene daughter of Theodora Raoulaina; for unknown reasons, his father rejected him on his deathbed ^{ix}
9	Michael P. Asanes fl. 1327/28 <i>PLP</i> 1514	none attested	
10	Andronikos P. Asanes fl. 1316–43 <i>PLP</i> 1489	<i>protostrator</i> ^x	
11	Isaakios P. Asanes fl. 1341 <i>PLP</i> 1494	<i>*megas doux</i> (ante Nov. 1341), then <i>*panhypersebastos</i> ^{xi}	
12	Konstantinos P. Asanes fl. 1324–42 <i>PLP</i> 1504	none attested	
13	Manuel P. Asanes fl. 1330–45 <i>PLP</i> 1505	none attested	sons of Andronikos II's sister Eirene (<i>PLP</i> 21359) with the <i>despotes</i> Ioannes III Asanes (<i>PLP</i> 1501), who had been briefly tsar of the Bulgarians (1279/80)
14	Andronikos A. P. ca. 1282 – 1328 brother of no. 15 <i>PLP</i> 21435	<i>protosebastos</i> (?–1326), <i>*protobestiarios</i> (1326–28)	
15	Konstantinos P. post-1282 – post-1345 brother of no. 14 <i>PLP</i> 21493–95 ^{xii}	<i>*megas papias</i> (1321–24), finally <i>protosebastos</i> (1342)	

Marriage	
Date of marriage if known	Comments
Eirene (<i>PLP</i> 2.4142) daughter of Theodora P. Raoulaina (<i>PLP</i> 10943) and the <i>protobestiarios</i> ⁱⁱ Ioannes Raoul (<i>PLP</i> 2.4125) = K's cousin	Eirene's mother was the widow of the Georgios Mouzalon murdered in 1258
before 1289	
anonymous daughter of the <i>pinkernes</i> Libadarios (<i>PLP</i> 14859/92538) ^{iv} 1293 ^{vi}	intended match had been Eudokia daughter of Mouzalon ^v (= <i>T</i> 1 #1; see also #4 below)
Rita/Maria (<i>PLP</i> 21394) daughter of Levon II king of Armenia	
Jan. 1296	
1. Eudokia daughter of Mouzalon (= <i>T</i> 1 #1)	only one baseborn son, Michael Katharos (<i>PLP</i> 10141)
2. Eudokia daughter of Neokaisareites (= <i>T</i> 1 #6)	
Eirene daughter of Choumnos (= <i>T</i> 1 #3)	no issue
Argentina Spinola	moved to Montferrat, 1306
1307	
married	issue
Eirene daughter of Metochites (= <i>T</i> 1 #4)	issue: Maria Palaiologina and an anonymous son attested as <i>protosebastos</i> 1327 and 1332
married	
married	father-in-law of Ioannes (VI) Kantakouzenos and Theodoros Synadenos (see #20 below)
Theodora P. Arachantloun = I's cousin (d. ante-1320; <i>PLP</i> 1229) / after 1307	no issue
married	issue
married?	
anonymous daughter of Konstantinos (?) Kokalas (= <i>T</i> 1 #5)	issue includes the <i>basilissa</i> Anna Palaiologina (<i>PLP</i> 21345)
married	issue

Imperial family names are abbreviated:

- A. = Angelina/Angelos;
D. = Doukaina/Doukas;
K. = Komnene/Kommenos;
P. = Palaiologina/Palaiologos

Marriage color codes:

aristocratic/military
probably aristocratic/military
middling-stratum certainly arranged by emp.
middling-stratum probably arranged by emp.
middling-stratum possibly arranged by emp.
middling-stratum with emperor's permission
spouse's background unknown
foreign spouse

- a. An asterisk marks dignities held during and after the first civil war (1321)
- i Pach. 8.19 (3:173.21—ἀνδρὸς ὑπὲρ δεσπότης—and 175.26–28).
- ii The dignity may have been granted not least to allow Michael VIII's niece Theodora to keep the title of *protobestiaria*, which she had acquired through her previous, murdered husband, Georgios Mouzalon.
- iii Pach. 8.26 (3:203.5–14).
- iv Pach. 8.26 (3:201.19–33). Theodoros was allowed to marry the daughter of the *pinkernes* Libadarios, who may have been promoted to *protobestiaries* on this occasion; in this capacity he arrested Philanthropenos (#23) in 1295 and was duly made *megas stratopedarches*. Libadarios had served in Andronikos's household which Michael VIII established in 1272 (see A. Heisenberg, "Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiologenzeit," *SBMünchen* [1920]: 3–144 at 33–81) and is thus likely to have been another trusted (aristocratic) man of the emperor. Pach. 1.21 (1:93.13) includes the Libadario among the noble families of the Laskarid empire.
- v There were doubts about the girl's integrity; see Pach. 8.26 (3:201.17–203.14).
- vi Pach. 8.26 (3:201.31–33).
- vii Theodoros was never made despotes; see B. Ferjančić, *Despoti u Vizantiji i Južnoslovenskim zemljama* (Belgrade, 1960), 41.
- viii Dignity promoted to fourth rank in the hierarchy in 1305; cf. Pach. 12.20.
- ix Pach. 11.22 (4:467.10–13).
- x This dignity may be hinted at by Manuel Philes. See E. Miller, ed., *Manuelis Philae carmina*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1855; repr. Amsterdam, 1967), 1:113 (213.238–39): ὁ γὰρ παρ' ἡμῖν τοῦ στρατοῦ πρωτοστάτης / ὁ λαμπρὸς Ἀνδρόνικος, ὁ χρυσοῦς γίγας. If so, Andronikos Asanes may have been replaced by Theodoros Synadenos in 1321/22; see Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 339. Given that none of his siblings seems to have entered the ranked hierarchy under Andronikos II, Isaakios's dignities may well originate from the rule of Andronikos III.
- xii *PLP* splits this into several entries; cf. Papadopoulos, *Versuch*, 30 (no. 48).

Table 2. (*continued*)

	Name	Highest dignity achieved during Andronikos II's rule ^a	Relation to Andronikos II	
16	Alexios (II) P. K. 1283–1330 brother of no. 17 <i>PLP</i> 12084	Trapezuntine emperor, 1297–1330	sons of Andronikos II's sister Eudokia (<i>PLP</i> 12064) with Trapezuntine emperor Ioannes II Komnenos (<i>PLP</i> 12106)	
17	Michael K. ca. 1285 – post-1355 brother of no. 16 <i>PLP</i> 12117	son and brother of Trapezuntine emperors; briefly (anti-)emperor himself (1341, 1344–49)		
<i>Distant “nephews,” i.e., second-degree cousins via Michael VIII's generation</i>				
18	Andronikos K. D. P. Tornikes fl. 1324–27 ^{xiii} <i>PLP</i> 29122	<i>*parakoimomenos</i> (1324–27)	grandsons of Michael VIII's half-brother, the <i>sebastokrator</i> Konstantinos (<i>PLP</i> 21498), with Eirene Branaina (<i>PLP</i> 3149) by their daughter Maria (<i>PLP</i> 21396) married to <i>kyr</i> ^{xiv} Isaakios Komnenos Doukas Tornikes (<i>PLP</i> 29125)
19	Ioannes K. D. A. Branas P. d. ante ca. 1325 ^{xv} <i>PLP</i> 21486	none attested		... by an anonymous daughter—the <i>despoina</i> of the Bulgars (<i>PLP</i> 26265)—married to Tsar Smilec (<i>PLP</i> 26266)
20	Theodoros D. P. K. Synadenos ca. 1286/87 ^{xvi} – ca. 1345 brother of no. 21 <i>PLP</i> 27120	<i>domestikos tes trapezes</i> (1321), <i>*protostrator</i> (1321/22–1342), <i>*protobestiarios</i> (1342/43)		... by their daughter Theodora (<i>PLP</i> 21381) married to the <i>meas stratopedarches</i> Ioannes Synadenos (<i>PLP</i> 27125)
21	Ioannes K. D. P. Synadenos ca. 1287/8–88/9 ^{xix} – fl. 1321/22–33 brother of no. 20 <i>PLP</i> 27126	<i>meas konostaulos</i>		
22	Tarchaneiotes fl. 1293–95 brother of no. 23 <i>PLP</i> 27470	<i>protosebastos</i>	grandsons of Michael VIII's sister Maria/Martha (<i>PLP</i> 21389) with Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes, by their son, the <i>protobestiarios</i> and <i>meas domestikos</i> Michael P. Tarchaneiotes (<i>PLP</i> 27505), married to the daughter of the <i>meas domestikos</i> Alexios D. Philanthropenos	
23	Alexios D. Philanthropenos ca. 1260 ^{xxiii} – post-1336/37 brother of no. 22 <i>PLP</i> 29752	<i>pinkernes</i> (1293–95/96, 1324–36/37) ^{xxiv}		
24	Gabriel (?) A. Senachereim b. ante 1321 <i>PLP</i> 25146	<i>meas stratopedarches</i> (ca. 1310 – ante 1321)	grandsons of Michael VIII's younger sister Eirene/Eugenia (<i>PLP</i> 21360) with Ioannes Kantakouzenos K. A. by their daughter Eugenia (<i>PLP</i> 21368) married to the <i>meas domestikos</i> Ioannes A. Senachereim (<i>PLP</i> 25150)
25	Ioannes P. Philes b. ante 1263 (?); fl. 1312–15 ^{xxvi} <i>PLP</i> 29815	<i>meas primmikeries</i> (1310), <i>protostrator</i> ⁸ (ca. 1315)		... (?) by their daughter Maria (<i>PLP</i> 16910) while briefly married to the <i>meas domestikos</i> Alexios Philes (d. 1263) (<i>PLP</i> 29809) ^{xxvii}
26	P. Philanthropenos K. Syrgiannes ca. 1290 – Aug. 1334 <i>PLP</i> 27167	<i>pinkernes</i> (1319–21), <i>*meas doux</i> (1321–28/29)		... (?) by their daughter Eugenia (<i>PLP</i> 21368) ^{xxviii} (?) married to Syrgiannes (<i>PLP</i> 27233)

Marriage	
Date of marriage if known	Comments
daughter of Bekha Jaqeli atabeg of Samtskhe	eloped, against Andronikos II's wishes, marriage with Eirene Choumnaina (= \mathcal{T}_1 #3; see also #5 above)
1299	
anonymous younger daughter of Akropolites (= \mathcal{T}_1 #2b)	issue: Ioannes III, (anti-) emperor 1342–44
married	
may have died too young to receive a dignity or marry	
Eudokia daughter of the <i>epi tou stratou</i> Theodoros Doukas Mouzakios (<i>PLP</i> 19428) ^{xvii}	solely among #13–19, not referred to as the emperor's nephews; Theodoros Synadenos was to become one of Andronikos II's more determined opponents in the first civil war; ^{xviii} issue (both brothers)
1. Thomaïs K. Doukaina Laskarina Kantakouzene P. ^{xx} (d. <i>ante</i> ca. 1325; ^{xxi} <i>PLP</i> 10944)	
2. Eirene Laskarina ^{xxii} K. D. P. (<i>PLP</i> 21362)	
married?	
Theodora daughter of Akropolites (= \mathcal{T}_1 #2a)	blinded and disgraced 1295/96; rehabilitated 1323/24
Helene (<i>PLP</i> 5995) daughter of Ioannes Angelos Doukas (<i>PLP</i> 205) and a Tornikina (<i>PLP</i> 29138) second daughter of the <i>sebastokrator</i> Konstantinos Tornikes ^{xxv}	offspring who died soon after their parents
married	
Maria Doukaina Palaiologina Syrgiannina (<i>PLP</i> 27168)	

- xiii Must have been dead by the time a list of family commemorations was added to the Lincoln College Typikon; he is last mentioned with his title in 1325 (Kant. 1.40 [1:195.3–4]) and then possibly again in 1327 (Kant. 1.51 [1:259.8–9]), together with Manuel Laskaris (*PLP* 14536, identical with 14549?) but without any title. I. Hutter, “Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons,” *JÖB* 79–114 at 105 dates these additions to ca. 1330; I suggest a slightly earlier date of ca. 1328. *Terminus post quem* is Theodoros Synadenos's promotion to the dignity of *protostrator*, which Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 339 and 397 dates to 1321/22. For Andronikos Tornikes see *BMFD* 4:1562 (§141).
- xiv No other title attested.
- xv Must have been dead by the time family commemorations were added to the Lincoln College Typikon: see *BMFD* 4:1562 (§142). Cf. above, n. xiv.
- xvi Hutter, “Geschichte,” 98–99.
- xvii Involved in Drimys's rebellion; fell in disgrace and became a monk 1305/6. There is no reason to assume that he was a *literatus*.
- xviii Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy,” 326.
- xix Hutter, “Geschichte,” 99.
- xx Likely of aristocratic origin, as she seems to add “Laskarina” and “Kantakouzene” to Synadenos's accumulation of names.
- xxi Must have been dead by the time family commemorations were added to the Lincoln College Typikon: see *BMFD* 4:1562 (§135). Cf. above, n. xiv.
- xxii Either another Laskarina, or her husband had added his first wife's name to his own and thus bestowed it on his second wife as well.
- xxiii Pach. 3.16 (1:273.16–18) mentions the marriage of Philanthropenos's parents in connection with events dating to ca. 1262; Philanthropenos's grandmother, Maria/Martha Palaiologina, was born ca. 1214/16 and married by 1237.
- xxiv Presumably stripped of his dignity while in disgrace: see no. 26.
- xxv E. T. Tsolakes, “Ο Ἰωάννης Ἀγγελος Δούκας καὶ ἡ οἰκογένειά του,” *Βυζαντινά* 17 (1994): 275–88; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 85 and nn. 105–7.
- xxvi I am not convinced that the Ioannes Philes mentioned Kant. 4.32 (3:239.16–19) and L. Perria, “Due documenti greci del XIV secolo in un codice della biblioteca Vaticana,” *JÖB* 30 (1980): 259–97 at 293 and 294–95 is the same individual as the *protostrator* active in the early fourteenth century.
- xxvii *PLP* remains silent about Philes' parents; Greg. 7.10 (1:263.15–18) describes him as *τινα τῶν εὐγενῶν τοῦ συγκλήτου καὶ κατὰ γένος τῷ βασιλεῖ προσηκόντων*.
- xxviii Papadopoulos, *Genealogie*, 21 (no. 34a); *PLP* remains skeptical.

the canvas of 1290 to 1310 politics it needs little imagination to realize that there was more to this *paideia* than the ability to draft ideologizing imperial rhetoric with appropriate finesse. The collapse of Asia Minor prompted waves of refugees to flock to Constantinople, the islands, and coastal towns of Thrace and Macedonia; the Catalan Company's betrayal subsequently devastated the core of the empire.⁷³ Social tensions were ubiquitous; the air was ripe with rebellion (1293, 1296, 1305). Any earthquake, as in July 1296,⁷⁴ or other heavenly portent might bring the final spark for matters to ignite and explode. While the central rule remained perhaps stronger than previously assumed,⁷⁵ local elites in the empire's remaining urban centers, increasingly forced to fend for themselves, nevertheless rediscovered the walled city, the *polis*, and with it their political voice.⁷⁶

In such critical times, *paideia*⁷⁷ empowered those who possessed it in two seminal directions. It created, by means of *habitus*, a group identity and thus enabled men of learning to connect relatively easily—both socially and spatially, in terms of medieval communication—with one another across the whole empire and

beyond, e.g., to Cyprus.⁷⁸ At the same time it enabled them to insert statements—affirmative as well as subversive—into public discourse and thus form or at least influence public opinion.⁷⁹ Such statements could be inserted performatively, in the ritualized stagings of rhetoric in the hierarchical web of *theatra* crisscrossing the capital and the empire, or in writing: in the form of letters, of circulating one's *œuvre*, or of anonymous pamphlets highly critical of the emperor—circulating aplenty in Andronikos II's Constantinople.⁸⁰ The expression of veiled and unveiled criticism of imperial politics became permissible even at court itself (*parresia*).⁸¹ Controlling such discourses—in Constantinople, Thessalonike, and elsewhere—would have been more important than ever. On the other hand, partly following from the previous, possession of *paideia* enabled one to directly petition the emperor or his ministers, a system Laiou aptly described as “government by rhetoric.”⁸² Equally, literati could hope for rewards in return for successful performances of their rhetorical pieces or letters, especially those in praise of the emperor or members of the aristocracy. However, these shortcuts did by no means imply that men of learning, individually or as *porte-paroles* of the second-tier urban elite, always received what they requested.

In politically unstable times, *parresia* worked potentially to the emperor's disadvantage; petitioning or “government by rhetoric,” to his advantage. In this system, the core actors, i.e., Andronikos II's *mesazon-tes* and top courtiers with family ties into the imperial clan, as well as those literati the emperor employed at his court without necessarily entering into a matrimonial alliance, may well have been placed strategically to control and channel both tendencies: using their

73 Laiou, *Constantinople* (n. 28 above).

74 Table 1, item C.

75 D. S. Kyritsis, “The ‘Common Chrysobulls’ of Cities and the Notion of Property in Late Byzantium,” *Symmeikta* 13 (1999): 229–45; K. Smyrlis, “The State, the Land, and Private Property: Confiscating Monastic and Church Properties in the Palaiologan Period,” in *Church and Society in Late Byzantium*, ed. D. Angelov (Kalamazoo, MI, 2009), 58–87.

76 Laiou, *Constantinople*, 229; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 62–120 and 311–29.

77 Riehle, “Rhetorik” (n. 26 above), 265–69; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 43–45 and 272–77. This *paideia* consisted, for the largest part, of archaizing grammar and rhetoric, an intricate, extremely learned sociolect construed as “Attic” or Atticizing and purposely different from the spoken language of the time; optionally, it included some philosophy and, rarely, astronomy. To master the intricacies of this sociolect seems to have taken up to a decade: it would thus have been a character- and *habitus*-building experience. For the longest time it was believed to have existed in the ivory tower (“rhetoric produced by gentlemen scholars for gentlemen scholars”). But recent concepts like “political literacy” (C. Holmes in *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson [New York, 2010], 137–48) or a careful distinction between active and passive command of this Atticizing sociolect (in order to understand, one does not need to be able to produce: Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 163–68) have opened the possibility that these literati communicated with strata of society both above and, importantly, below them.

78 To give a sense of regionality, Thessalonike and Philadelphia have been indicated in fig. 2 as examples of such regionally configured networks, even if some of their actors moved on in the course of their careers, usually to Constantinople.

79 Matschke and Tinnefeld, *Gesellschaft* (n. 1 above), 29 speak of “wichtigsten gesellschaftlichen Meinungsbildner”; see also K.-P. Matschke, “Die spätbyzantinische Öffentlichkeit,” in *Mentalität und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter*, ed. S. Tanz (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 155–223; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 29–180.

80 E.g., Pach. 13.5.

81 Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 161–80.

82 Laiou, “Correspondence,” offers an excellent example, comparing the avenues of access to power open to Gregorios II Kyprios with those open to Athanasios I.

proximity to the emperor to grant favors and connect literati to the heart of power in order to keep *parresia* and discontent in check, as it were, thus acting as the “switchboard,” or fuses, between Constantinopolitan and urban or local literati on the one hand and the Palaiologoi or the aristocratic elite on the other.

Contingent vs. Systemic

If *paideia* was indeed the *conditio sine qua non*, the core actors' fitness did not rest solely on it. Other promising young men of comparable education capable of succeeding at court—and blessed with daughters—would certainly have been available.⁸³ Thus it seems reasonable to suggest a formula of “*paideia* + X” which brought candidates to the emperor's attention; on the specifics one can only speculate. Bringing possibly disgruntled members or sections of the middle stratum under the helm of Palaiologan rule may well have motivated Andronikos and given certain candidates a competitive edge over others. In the cases of Mouzalon and Metochites, for all one knows, true sympathy may have been at work; yet both Mouzalon and Metochites were scions of middling-stratum families who had suffered from Michael VIII's policies. In Mouzalon's case, Andronikos even chose to ignore publicly examined and accepted charges of misconduct.⁸⁴ Making amends in this direction would tie in well with Andronikos's policy of appeasement toward the Arsenites.⁸⁵

The cases of Choumnos and Akropolites seem to provide further circumstantial evidence that the emperor's appointments were not entirely contingent—and thus did not solely benefit favorites—but were indeed systemic. Unlike Metochites in 1290, Choumnos for instance does not seem to have been Andronikos's own discovery but rather that of his aunt, the learned *protobestiaria* Theodora Palaiologina Kantakouzene Raoulaina;⁸⁶ of the patriarch Gregorios Kyprios; and

of the latter's former disciple Theodoros Mouzalon, then *mesazon* and possibly Raoulaina's son. Mouzalon's illness and subsequent retirement from the *mesastikion* and Choumnos's promotion, presumably prior to the emperor's return from Asia Minor in late June 1293, more or less coincided with the scandal involving Andronikos II's younger brother Konstantinos and his wife, Theodora Raoulaina's daughter Eirene.⁸⁷ While Choumnos states that this patroness praised him openly at every occasion,⁸⁸ Pachymeres shares the illuminating detail that Andronikos II did not fully trust Choumnos at the time of the latter's appointment to the position of *mesazon*—at Mouzalon's recommendation—and thus appointed the older Ioannes Glykys, the later patriarch (p. 1315–19),⁸⁹ to the office of *epi ton deeseon* with a clear mandate to assist as well as control Choumnos's actions:

When the aforementioned sickness oppressed the *protobestiarios* and did not allow him to recover, because of his troubles, following his estimations and advice the emperor appointed the *koiaistor* (*quaestor*) Nikephoros Choumnos *mystikos* and made him *mesazon*, assigning as his associate—for he did not yet have confidence in him alone—the *epi ton deeseon* Ioannes Glykys.⁹⁰

Any connection with the scandal around the *porphyrogennetos* and his wife, and Raoulaina's role in the background, must by necessity remain hypothetical; Riehle suggests that Andronikos's hesitations concerned only the relative youth of Choumnos, who must have been—just as Andronikos II himself—in his early thirties by

83 E.g., Ioannes Glykys, who had several daughters.

84 For the misconduct, see table 1, no. 1.

85 P. Gounarides, *Τὸ κίνημα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν (1261–1310): Ἰδεολογικὲς διαμάχες τὴν ἐποχὴ τῶν πτῶτων Παλαιολόγων* (Athens, 1999).

86 The widow of both the unfortunate *protobestiarios* Georgios Mouzalon, murdered at Sosandra, and the *protobestiarios* Ioannes Raoul. On her patronage of Gregorios Kyprios, see S. Kotzabassi, “Scholarly Friendship in the Thirteenth Century: Patriarch Gregory II Kyprios and Theodora Raoulaina,” *Parekbolai* 1 (2011): 115–70; of Choumnos, Riehle “Funktionien,” 304–5; idem,

“Rhetorik,” 261 and idem, “Καὶ σε προστάτιν ἐν αὐτοῖς τῆς αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψομεν σωτηρίας: Theodora Raulaina als Stifterin und Patronin,” in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. L. Theis, M. Mullett, and M. Grünbart (Vienna, 2012) = *WJKg* 60–61 (2011–12): 299–315 at 310.

87 See table 1, item A and table 2, no. 1.

88 *Ep.* 77, ed. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (n. 26 above), 93–4; Riehle, “Theodora Raulaina,” 310.

89 According to S. Kourouses, “Ὁ λόγιος οἰκουμενικὸς πατριάρχης Ἰωάννης ΙΓ' Γλυκύς,” *Ἐπ. Ἐτ. Βυζ. Σπ.* 41 (1974): 297–405 at 302, born ca. 1260; *PLP* 4271.

90 Pach. 8.20 (3:183.10–14), italics mine: βασιλεὺς δὲ τῆς νόσου κατεπειγούσης τὸν πρωτοβεστιάριον, ὡς μὴδ' ἀναπνεῖν ἐώσης τοῖς πόνοις, σκέψει καὶ βουλῇ τούτου τὸν Χοῦμνον κοιαίστορα Νικηφόρον εἰς μυστικὸν ἀνάξας ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου καθίστησι, προσνεύμας αὐτῷ κοινωνὸν (οὕτω γὰρ ἐκείνῳ καὶ μόνῳ ἐθάρρει) καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ τῶν δεήσεων Γλυκὺν Ἰωάννην.

the time.⁹¹ A year later, with Konstantinos *porphyrogennetos* and Michael Strategopoulos firmly convicted, Choumnos was confirmed as sole *mesazon*.⁹² A trustful relationship seems to have developed, culminating in Andronikos's drawn-out project to strike a marriage deal: in 1303, Choumnos became the emperor's *sympentheros* ("co-father-in-law");⁹³ he held the *mesastikion* until 1314/16, when he retired because of his gout, not in the wake of a court intrigue.⁹⁴ In 1306, his relative by marriage, the *megas primmikerios* Kassianos, chose to use him as his broker with the emperor when embarking on a short-lived rebellion.⁹⁵ Such incidents may be behind Metochites' rather open allegations of the emperor's dislike of Choumnos, written in the early 1320s yet alluding to the first decade of the century.⁹⁶ Metochites may of course have done so for his own pleasure without much truth to it; on the other hand he may—must?—have sensed that Andronikos's support of Choumnos was waning.⁹⁷ Incidentally, Choumnos's latest surviving letters to the emperor, dated ca. 1323/24, seek to reconfirm their trusted relationship, again implying that there may have been reason for concern.⁹⁸

Equally interesting is the case of Konstantinos Akropolites.⁹⁹ Although he "inherited" his father's prestigious dignity of *megas logothetes* in 1294 he was not granted the influential *mesastikion*, which had just gone to the younger Choumnos; it is difficult to say whether one ought to read anything into this. Akropolites may have had the "wrong" teacher: Holobolos instead of Kyprios.¹⁰⁰ A seemingly propitious marriage deal for his firstborn daughter Eudokia in 1294 backfired when his son-in-law, the *pinkernes* Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, was pushed into an unsuccessful rebellion the following year.¹⁰¹ Akropolites' brother Melchisedek was uncomfortably close to the usurper, too.¹⁰² The repercussions affected Akropolites. In his letters, he talks about his daughter's "misfortune" (*δυστυχία*). He himself was briefly exiled; nevertheless he succeeded in persuading the emperor to release certain men unjustly accused.¹⁰³ Akropolites ultimately regained the emperor's good grace and was given a second chance (either in compensation or in order to tie him more firmly to Palaiologan rule) when his younger daughter married the son of the Trapezuntine emperor.¹⁰⁴ In his *Life of St. Theodosia*, we see him create a blood relationship with the emperor via the latter's sister Eudokia, mother-in-law to his second daughter.¹⁰⁵

91 Riehle, "Funktionen," 13 (age), 25 n. 120, 119 n. 667.

92 Pach. 8.31 (3:215.17–20).

93 Above, 257 and n. 68. Incidentally, Riehle, "Theodora Raulaina," 302 reminds us that the glory came at a price: long widowed and her father dead, the *basilissa* Eirene Choumnaina did not leave her monastic retirement since she could not afford the retinue she deemed necessary to underline her imperial status. See A. Constantinides Hero, *A Woman's Quest for Spiritual Authority: The Correspondence of Princess Irene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina* (Brookline, MA, 1986), 76 (*ep.* 15.64–71).

94 Thus convincingly Riehle, "Funktionen," 13–26 against Ševčenko, *Études* (n. 33 above), 145–66.

95 Pach. 13.24 (4:681.24–27); Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 325–26 and n. 120. Pachymeres calls Kassianos (*PLP* 11346) the emperor's *gambros* (*ibid.*, 681.3) and Choumnos's *sympentheros*: how exactly family relations went remains unclear. Pachymeres does not seem to imply that Choumnos acted disloyally on this occasion but suspicion may have arisen.

96 M. Treu, "Dichtungen des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites," *Programm des Victoria-Gymnasiums zu Potsdam*, 84, no. 2 (Potsdam, 1895), *carm.* 1.754–57 (italics mine): . . . κατ' ἄρ ὁποῖον ἐπειγόμενος νόον, ἀμφὶ τὸδ' ἄλλοις / φασκόμεν εἰατέον, πρὸς γὰρ ἀμέων ἀπέοικεν, / ἥ ἐτ' ἀπανθῶν κείνῳ γ' ὅς πρό τ' ἔην ἀνὴρ φθάς, / ἥ ἐτὰρ προστέργων, ἥ ἐ γ' ἴσως ἄμ' ἄμφω.

97 Riehle, "Funktionen," 15–16.

98 *Ibid.*, 286–87.

99 In general, D. M. Nicol, "Constantine Acropolites: A Prosopographical Note," *DOP* 19 (1965): 249–56.

100 Constantinides, *Higher Education* (n. 24 above), 38–42 on Akropolites' teacher and 52–59 on Holobolos. The emphasis on Attic names of the months in *ep.* 73, ed. Romano, *Costantino Acropolita* (n. 25 above), 164, might point to Pachymeres.

101 Table 1, item B: it remains open whether Andronikos II had his hand in this or not. When describing the emperor's reaction to the rebellion, Pach. 9.12 (3:255.10–13) mentions only Philanthropenos's brother, Tarchaneiotas (table 2, no. 22), not Akropolites.

102 H.-V. Beyer, "Die Chronologie der Briefe des Maximos Planoudes an Alexios Dukas Philanthropenos und dessen Umgebung," *REB* 51 (1993): 111–37; A. Laiou, "Some Observations on Alexios Philanthropenos und Maximos Planoudes," *BMGS* 4 (1978): 89–99; G. Pascale, *Massimo Planude, Epistole a Melchisedek* (Alessandria, 2007).

103 *Ep.* 102, ed. Romano, 197–98.

104 The brother of the very Alexios who had defied the emperor with regard to marrying Choumnos's daughter; cf. table 2, nos. 16 and 17.

105 Akropolites' *Life of St. Theodosia* is now published in S. Kotzabassi, *Das hagiographische Dossier der heiligen Theodosia von Konstantinopel: Einleitung, Edition und Kommentar*, Byzantinisches Archiv 21 (Berlin and New York, 2009), 107–52; see also Nicol, "Constantine Acropolites," 252.

Yet the promotion of the dignity of *megas logothetes* from twelfth to ninth position of the court hierarchy once Theodoros Metochites succeeded to it in 1321¹⁰⁶—which may or may not have been a deliberate insult against Akropolites—shows with whom Andronikos II's favor rather lay. But then Metochites in turn had to live with the fact that he never achieved the still higher ranking dignity of *protobestiarios*, which Mouzalon held in combination with the dignity of *megas logothetes*—but was granted, on the other hand, the privilege to restore the “imperial monastery” of Chora,¹⁰⁷ while Choumnos and Akropolites had to content themselves with less prestigious foundations.

There is, not least with such *divide et impera* tactics in mind, just about enough evidence that Andronikos may not have been entirely free in his decisions and not solely have promoted his favorites but the “fittest,” as it were, representatives of Byzantium's second-tier elite—even if those promoted may often have turned, at least for some time, into favorites.

A Matter of Preferential Attachment

While every learned member of the elite possessed the ability to petition the emperor, writing to the emperor did not necessarily imply that the latter would also listen to—surely not read himself—what had been sent; and while every learned member of the court hierarchy could potentially function as a broker,¹⁰⁸ the core actors' privileged proximity to the ruler induced other literati to preferentially attach themselves to them

as opposed to less fit nodes in the network.¹⁰⁹ Even within the core group, those holding the *mesastikion* (Mouzalon, Choumnos, Metochites) proved more popular than the others; in fact there is just about enough evidence to suggest that different men of learning sought different coalitions: some approached Choumnos, others Metochites, others Akropolites. Thus whatever initial fitness the core actors may have possessed, once they received the emperor's stamp of approval, as it were, by means of a marriage alliance they inevitably attracted more and more links. The most lucid description of this process seems to derive from Theodoros Hyrtakenos's monody on the recently deceased Nikephoros Choumnos, a text that indirectly affirms that the *epi tou kanikleiou* had introduced learned men to the emperor—perhaps by arranging a performance of their rhetoric in the imperial *theatron*—and thus become their benefactor.¹¹⁰

Gregorios Kyprios's surviving fifty-three letters to Theodoros Mouzalon demonstrate to which degree he used the means of petition to achieve his goals; Laiou has compellingly compared Kyprios's targeted, network-exploiting approach to the letters of his successor, Athanasios I, who lacked the *paideia*—and thus the network—of approaching the emperor's learned ministers directly.¹¹¹ When imprisoned in 1305/6, possibly in the wake of the Drimys rebellion and its repercussions, Manuel Moschopoulos petitioned Akropolites and Metochites, complaining that the—unfortunately anonymous—*megas dioiketes* kept him imprisoned against the emperor's orders.¹¹² Thomas Magistros, traveling to Constantinople presumably in 1312/13 as porte-parole of the Thessalonian *gerousia*, again

106 Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos* (n. 3 above), 277–95. According to Kantakouzenos, both Metochites and Akropolites were styled *megas logothetes* after April 1321 (L. Schopen, ed., *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum libri IV*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1828–32), 1.14 [1:67.22–68.2; henceforth, Kant.]): πρὸς τοῦτοις δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἀκροπολίτης ἦν Κωνσταντῖνος, μέγας λογοθέτης ὦν καὶ αὐτός. This seems unusual but not entirely impossible; cf. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, 316 on one office held by several individuals at the same time. However, this pertained usually to low-ranking ones. In any case it seems unlikely that Akropolites' rank in the hierarchy was raised to twelfth position as well. I am grateful to Alexander Riehle for bringing this passage to my attention.

107 See P. Magdalino, “Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and Constantinople,” in Klein, Ousterhout, and Pitarakis, *Kariye Camii* (n. 60 above), 169–87.

108 J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions* (Oxford, 1974), 148.

109 Barabási, *Linked* (n. 7 above), 79–92; see R. Albert and A.-L. Barabási, “Statistical Mechanics of Complex Networks,” *Reviews of Modern Physics* 74 (2002): 48–97, esp. 76–78 for the full scientific background.

110 Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca* (n. 26 above), 1:288.7–11: ἔδει μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις μᾶλλον τῶν κατ' ἐκείνον σοφῶν, ὧν ἦν τε τὰ πρῶτα καὶ οὗς τῷ διὰ θεοῦ βασιλεύοντι προσφκείωσε, καὶ πράγμασι δικαίους εἶναι πενθήσαι τὸν εὐεργέτην καὶ λόγοις ἐπιταφίοις κοσμήσαι τὸν ἄνδρα. . . , italics mine; see Riehle, “Theodora Raulaina,” 307.

111 Laiou, “Correspondence” (n. 23 above). Neokaisareites and Choumnos did not yet hold their respective dignities; Kyprios rather addressed them as his disciples.

112 I. Ševčenko, “The Imprisonment of Manuel Moschopoulos in the Year 1305 or 1306,” *Speculum* 27, no. 2 (1952): 133–57; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology* (n. 28 above), 310–47; Gaul, “Performative Reading” (n. 27 above).

involved Metochites, and forged an alliance that lasted until the latter's fall from power.¹¹³ Hyrtakenos's¹¹⁴ collection of ninety-three letters dating to ca. 1310–20 has been characterized as a rhetorical demonstration of his lifelong quest to obtain a salaried teaching position and it features seven letters to Choumnos, twenty-one to Metochites, and fifteen to Emperor Andronikos II.¹¹⁵ Indicatively, one letter, to Theodoros Phialites,¹¹⁶ demonstrates that not every letter addressed to the emperor reached its destination without additional effort:

Two days ago, on the sixth day of the waning week, I sent to the emperor a letter and gifts which the season brought forth. I learned that the gifts pleased the emperor while my letter was not yet read. . . . It is thus necessary for Phialites, this pure chalice of friendship, to insist on a time to hand my letter to the emperor, for Phialites to read it [to the emperor], and for me to learn through him about the emperor's decision regarding these matters.¹¹⁷

Another schoolmaster, Maximos Neamonites, petitioned Metochites for help against the anonymous *protokynegos* who asked to be compensated for property which, Neamonites claimed, the *protokynegos*'s parents had given his own parents as a gift.¹¹⁸

113 Gaul, *Thomas Magistros* (n. 27 above), 62–114 and 324–26.

114 F. J. G. La Porte-du Theil, ed., “Lettres de Théodore l’Hyr-tacénien,” *Notices et Extraits* 5 (1798): 709–44; 6 (1800): 1–48. See A. Karpozilos, “The Correspondence of Theodoros Hyrtakenos,” *JÖB* 40 (1990): 275–94; G. Fatouros, “Die Chronologie der Briefe des Theodoros Hyrtakenos,” *JÖB* 43 (1993): 221–31; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 284–88.

115 *Ep.* 46, ed. La Porte-du Theil, “Lettres,” 13 (1800) to “Akropolis,” presumably Konstantinos Akropolites, is somewhat puzzling, as the latter is addressed without any title.

116 *PLP* 29715.

117 *Ep.* 24, ed. La Porte-du Theil, “Lettres,” 741 (1798): πρὸ τρίτης ταύτης ἡμέρας, ἥ δ’ ἦν ἕκτη φθινοῦσης ἐβδομάδος, γράμματα καὶ πόπανα πεπόμφειν τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἃ δὴ προσαγόχε χρόνος. ἀλλ’ ἔχω μαθὼν τὰ πόπανα μὲν ἡδέως ἐδεδοκέναι τὸν βασιλέα, μήπω δ’ ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὰ γράμματα. . . . δεῖ δὲ Φιαλίτην, τὸν ἄκρατον κρατῆρα φιλίας, πείσαι χρόνον τῷ βασιλεῖ προσενηγοχέναι τὰ γράμματα, Φιαλίτην δὲ ἀναγνῶναι, καὶ μὲν αὐτοῦ γνῶναι τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν ψῆφον τοῦ βασιλέως.

118 M. Mitrea, “A Late Byzantine Πειπαιδευμένος: Maximos Neamonites and His Letter Collection,” *JÖB* 64 (2014): 197–223.

Michael Gabras's collection of 462 letters, spanning roughly two decades, from ca. 1308 to 1327, provides manifold examples of learned patronage at court,¹¹⁹ with the caveat that many letters invoking such favors were anonymized. As Gabras explained, in his own hand, in the margins of Marc. gr. 446, fol. 3v:

Note: the letters addressed to those with the power of taking action do not have the name [of the addressee] affixed to them; their creator has willingly erased it so that no immortal shame may come to him as one who enlisted himself for all future among the disappointed by those who, by their very name/title,¹²⁰ would be believed to effect everything immediately, and so that from them in turn through veiling their name, a big chunk of blame by those who hear about [their inactivity] shall be removed. Leave aside the one who has given birth to these letters (who even in this accorded fame to such individuals who granted him no kindness whatsoever, behaving such toward them that he praised them to the best of his capacity) and you shall encounter some letter about these very matters as you progress into the depth of the collection.¹²¹

119 G. Fatouros, ed., *Die Briefe des Michael Gabras* (ca. 1290–nach 1350), 2 vols. (Vienna, 1973).

120 Possibly a pun; for *onoma* as title compare Metochites, *Poem* 1, ed. M. Treu, “Dichtungen des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites,” in *Programm des Königlichen Viktoria-Gymnasiums zu Potsdam* (1895), vv. 764–65 (αὐτίκα μὲν γ’ ἐμὲ τιμᾷ βασιλεὺς ἔξοχ’ ἄλλῳ / οὐνόματι μάλ’ περόχω πάρος ἤπερ ἦεν) or Maximos Planoudes, *Ep.* 65, ed. Leone, 96.10–11 (ἐνθα δὲ τὸ πρωτοβεστιάριον ὄνομα κείται); cf. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, 270.

121 *Ep.* 5, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:15 app.: σημείωσαι· αἱ πρὸς τοὺς ἐν δυνάμει τῇ τοῦ πράττειν τῶν ἐπιστολῶν τὸ ὄνομα οὐκ ἔχουσι προσπαραγραμμένον, τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐκόντος ἐξαλείψαντος, ἵνα μήτ’ αὐτῷ ἀθάνατον αἰσχύνην καταλίποι, τῶν καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τὸ πᾶν αὐτίκα ἂν πιστευομένων δύνασθαι εἰς πᾶν ἐξῆς ἀποτυχόντα καταλέγοντι αὐτόν, αὐτοῖς τε πάλιν ἐν τῷ συγκαταλύπτειν τοῦνομα πολὺ τι χρῆμα τῆς παρὰ τῶν ἀκουόντων περιέλη [περιέλοι] μέμψεως. ἀμέλει τοῦ γεγεννηκότος καὶ ἐπιστολῇ ἐντεύξει περὶ τούτων τῶν αὐτῶν εἰς βάθος μέντοι τῶν ἐπιστολῶν χωρῶν τὸ προσωτάτω, προσπεριτιθέντος καὶ ἐν τούτῳ δόξαν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις πρὸς μηδὲν φιλανθρωπευσάμενοις περὶ τοῦτον τοιοῦτου περὶ τούτους τούτου γινομένου, εὐφημοῦντος τὰ εἰς δύναμιν. See also *ep.* 378, to Manuel Gabalas, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:597–98.

Altogether there are twenty-two such anonymized letters to “one of the powerful” (τινὶ τῶν δυνατῶν); five of them can be safely said to be addressed to Metochites, who otherwise does not appear in the collection.¹²² Choumnos is the addressee of four letters discussing rhetorical matters; if letters of more material concern were addressed to him—or any of the other core actors—they may well be among the anonymized ones. Further instances of Gabras invoking support can be traced. Once, comparable to Hyrtakenos above, he addressed the emperor’s *epi ton deeseon*, Georgios Chatzikes,¹²³ in order to ensure that a letter of his found the emperor’s attention.¹²⁴ Saving his (younger?) brother from imprisonment was left to Theodoros Xanthopoulos.¹²⁵ Further cases involved the *epi ton anamneseon* Philippos Logaras, one of Gabras’s closest allies;¹²⁶ the *protonotarios* Nikolaos Lampenos,¹²⁷ and once the famous philosopher Joseph.¹²⁸ Gabras’s friend Manuel/Matthaios Gabalas,¹²⁹ *chartophylax* and *protonotarios* at Philadelphia before becoming metropolitan at Ephesos in 1329, provides a compelling example of a literatus who, via his mentor and superior Theoleptos metropolitan of Philadelphia, enjoyed direct access to Nikephoros Choumnos while, in order to petition Metochites, he had to take a detour via the philosopher Joseph.¹³⁰

122 *Epp.* 5, 14, 42, 102, 132, 155, 156, 160, 179, 218, 231, 235, 268, 280, 283, 333, 356; letters in italics asked for the powerful addressee’s intervention with the emperor in Gabras’s favor. The equally anonymized *epp.* 84, 105, 317, 322, and 460 were quite certainly addressed to Metochites. A final four anonymized letters were directed to “one of the powerful among the priests” (47, 63, 82, 114).

123 *PLP* 30724.

124 *Ep.* 312, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:407. See F. Schrijver, “Daily Life at the Blachernai Palace: The Servants of the Imperial Bedchamber (1261–1354),” in *Byzantine Court*, 83–87 at 86.

125 *Ep.* 371, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:580–84; plus *ep.* 369, *ibid.* 576–78 to the emperor. Xanthopoulos may have intervened; *ep.* 410, *ibid.* 636 Gabras thanked the emperor for helping his brother.

126 *PLP* 14990. Especially *epp.* 220 and 295, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:367–68 and 457–59. Gabras addressed altogether 28 letters to Logaras.

127 *PLP* 14431. *Ep.* 341, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:538–39.

128 *PLP* 9078. *Ep.* 300.140–88, ed. Fatouros, *Briefe*, 2:472–81.

129 *PLP* 3309.

130 For Choumnos, see D. R. Reinsch, ed., *Die Briefe des Matthaios von Ephesos im Codex Vindobonensis theol. gr. 174* (Berlin, 1974), 88–89 (*ep.* B5), 96–98 (B11), 101–2 (B13–14). For Metochites, *epp.* B3 and B4, ed. Reinsch, *Briefe*, 84–87.

Correlated to this epistolary system of asking for and granting favors was the system of live rhetorical performances in the so-called rhetorical *theatra*. The core actors and other literati courtiers effectively controlled access to the imperial *theatron* and thus the distribution of social/cultural capital; the *theatra* convened perhaps in the houses of the *mesazontes*, Choumnos and Metochites, were the most prestigious after the emperor’s. It is along these lines that Michael Gabras’s complaint in the early 1320s again to Theodoros Xanthopoulos needs to be understood. He had composed an oration in praise of the emperor which the latter had read yet failed to arrange for public performance in the imperial *theatron*. While Gabras pretended to be content he may well have hoped that Xanthopoulos would persuade the emperor to hold a public performance after all.¹³¹

While every learned man with access to the emperor and the powerful could receive petitions, clearly the core actors’ centrality within the network grew disproportionately—they evolved into hubs: “the rich get richer.”¹³² Many if not most literati across the empire were caught in this system, or played along. However, not everyone accepted the core actors as hubs without a grudge; it may not be an accident that complaints about *phthonos* (“envy”), while common to many literati of the early Palaiologan period, abound in the writings of Metochites as well as Choumnos’s reports to the emperor.¹³³ There was also resentment against the social climbers among the aristocracy.¹³⁴ Serving as a hub in the network came at a price.

131 *Ep.* 281 to Theodoros Xanthopoulos, see also *epp.* 284 to Kabasilas Sophos and 286 “to all learned friends.”

132 Barabási, *Linked* (n. 7 above), 79–93; Watts, *Six Degrees* (n. 16 above), 108–14.

133 See now M. Hinterberger, *Phthonos: Mißgunst, Neid und Eifersucht in der byzantinischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 323–5; *idem*, “Studien zu Theodoros Metochites,” *JÖB* 51 (2009): 285–319 at 294–302; I. Polemis, “The Treatise *On Those Who Unjustly Accuse Wise Men, of the Past and Present*: A New Work by Theodore Metochites,” *BZ* 102 (2009): 203–17; Gaul, *Thomas Magistros* (n. 27 above), 298–310.

134 Kyritses, “Byzantine Aristocracy” (n. 1 above), 348–49 on the Metochitai and Choumnoi.

Conclusions: Fusing the First and the Second Tiers

A tendency inherent in Byzantine politics as much as in politics generally, the fostering of new, theoretically dependent, thus ideally loyal elites—in this particular case, learned elites representing the “second tier” of society—culminated under Andronikos II Palaiologos. This emperor, who never campaigned in person, at first glance adopted and adapted the Komnenian rule of appointing non-military, non-noble *mesazontes* and ministers; leading positions in the army he reserved for members of his immediate and close family.¹³⁵

While it proved impossible to trace Andronikos II's exact motives for promoting some literati as opposed to other seemingly suitable candidates, the frequency of such promotions combined with marriages suggests that their function was systemic, not contingent. The emperor won highly talented spin-doctors, whose careers depended largely on him—certainly until a marriage happened, proximity or distance were not determined by the degree of relation—and on whom he could thus hope to rely. These spin-doctors came with contacts through the empire-wide network of literati—as *porte-paroles* of the urban second-tier or middling-stratum elites—as well as into the church, and fostered and expanded their own networks in office. At the same time, by making certain men of learning members of his family he presented role models to other middling-stratum men of learning in both Constantinople and the provinces, as vivid demonstration that loyalty might pay off well. One is inclined to think of a “lottery principle,” which, by giving hope to many that incredible social rise might be on the horizon, created an incentive for avoiding conflict by channeling the power of rhetoric into support of, rather than opposition to, the emperor. Literati thus promoted gained economic, social, and cultural capital: some in the extreme, such as Choumnos and Metochites;¹³⁶ most to a lesser degree and in smaller dignities or occasional benefactions, as largesse coming from the emperor through the hands of “his” men. Those who did not gain at all, or little, as

135 Manuel Tagaris may be a rare example of a social climber in the army; see above, n. 53.

136 To the point that their daughter's dowry became interesting to the emperor, whose appointments had enriched them in the first place: see above, n. 17.

Hyrtakenos and Gabras, still lived with the hope that they might—as evidenced by their continuing epistolary quest to incur favors—if only one of their rhetorical compositions found the favor it deserved.

In the specific political situation of the early fourteenth century one may finally suggest that not solely the emperor's wish to gain loyal servants prompted such promotions, but the overall growing importance of the middling stratum. Not all attempts to woo its members proved successful: Thomas Magistros, for instance, declined a career at court; and indeed Andronikos II's bonds to Thessalonike remained fragile.¹³⁷ During the civil war, the city defected twice, 1322 and 1328. Nevertheless creating the links he did may have given the emperor hope of controlling through them not only the urban elites but the first-tier elite, his extended family clan. The most dangerous challenges to Andronikos II's rule had come from within his own (core) clan:¹³⁸ his brother Konstantinos and Manuel Strategopoulos in 1292/93; Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos in 1295/96; the *despotes* Michael Angelos in 1303; finally, Kassianos in 1306.¹³⁹ With all marriage links in place, for more than a decade, from ca. 1306 to 1320, Andronikos managed to stabilize his rule at least with regard to his own family.¹⁴⁰ If one visualizes the late Byzantine first- and second-tier elite network in a simplified bipartite structure—with the first tier (the extended imperial family plus aristocracy) and the second tier (the middling classes) as groups—it is in the core nodes that these two most influential/significant groups are fused in late Byzantine society.

Preisner-Kapeller's analysis of Byzantine *dynatoi*—comprising the aristocracy and leading literati—between 1310 and 1341 indeed assigns some of the highest degrees of betweenness to Metochites and his sons, Michael and Demetrios.¹⁴¹ Unbeknownst to

137 This may have been for various reasons, including Empress Eirene's long residence there.

138 As Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I* (n. 2 above), 190 observed for the Komnenoi.

139 See table 1: A, B, D, F.

140 This may of course partly be owed to the relative scarcity of sources for the 1306 to 1320 period.

141 See Preisner-Kapeller, “Complex Historical Dynamics” (n. 15 above), 87–90 and idem, “Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Analyse mittelalterlicher sozialer Netzwerke am Beispiel der spätbyzantinischen Kirche und Gesellschaft,” figs. 35–36, available at www.academia.edu/1090315 (accessed 8 February 2014).

the emperor himself and his contemporaries, Andronikos II's networking policies may well have accelerated the subsequent merger of the first-tier elite with the richer members of the middling stratum in the wake of the second civil war (1341–47), a merger which characterizes the last century of Byzantine history.¹⁴²

In arranging these marriages Andronikos II carefully avoided the mistakes Theodoros II Laskaris had committed. For one, he inversed the pattern. Instead of seeking to ennoble his ministers by marrying them to female members of his family, he more patiently ennobled them indirectly via their daughters and thus offered, possibly, less offense. Second, without profiting from the insights of modern network science, he spread these marriages over more than a decade, from ca. 1294 to 1305/6, and further to ca. 1320: he thus created a number of structurally (and roughly) equivalent, overlapping hubs, thereby increasing the robustness of his network.¹⁴³

In sum, Andronikos II integrated the booming middling stratum as cleverly as any, if not more cleverly than most, of his predecessors into the governance of empire, facilitating and encouraging, to borrow Laiou's apt phrase, "government by rhetoric."¹⁴⁴ This may not come as a surprise, as this emperor seems to have innovated in other respects, in order to propagate Palaiologan rule to local elites and populations: e.g., the number of imperial portraits surviving in provincial churches—along the Via Egnatia, as described by the late Anna Christidou, and on the Peloponnese—seems significantly higher during Andronikos's rule.¹⁴⁵ Whatever Andronikos's motives and however mixed the success of his measures, his policies certainly prompted contemporary literati to praise his

love of learning—inducing in turn modern scholarship to foster the image of an aging emperor fond of learning,¹⁴⁶ who, increasingly out of sync with reality, surrounded himself with his learned favorites. It is with such an image in mind that Donald Nicol may have claimed that "[r]eflexions on the state of contemporary society when couched in [the] archaic language" of the archaizing sociolect that was the trademark of Byzantine *paideia* were "always at least one step removed from reality."¹⁴⁷ From the network perspective one might well conclude that those who composed such reflexions were, in fact, ever getting one step closer to power.

When the network finally came under mortal threat, it staged a veritable fight. Whereas Theodoros II's links had been undone in one orchestrated blow, as the events of 1258 showed, Andronikos II's creation proved more stable. When his grandson Andronikos (III) challenged his rule over a period of seven years from 1321 to 1328, the old emperor's hubs which had lasted this long (Mouzalon and Akropolites were dead; Choumnos old and sick) offered considerable resistance. Kyritses has offered a compelling, if provocative, reading of Metochites' masterminding the 1325/26 uprising of the latter's son-in-law, the *panhypersebastos* Ioannes, which sought to sever Macedonia from the empire and create an appanage for those loyal to the elder Andronikos.¹⁴⁸ Kokalas's intervention with his son-in-law, the *protobestiarios* Andronikos Palaiologos, prompted the latter to change sides back to his uncle, Andronikos II, in 1327.¹⁴⁹ If the network ultimately failed, it did so for three reasons. First, Andronikos III's main supporters—Andronikos II's "nephews," the *domestikos tes trapezes* Theodoros Synadenos and Syrgiannes,¹⁵⁰ and the *megas papias* Ioannes Kantakouzenos—not only did not share any substantial links with the core nodes but felt their chances actively forestalled by the network in

142 Matschke and Tinnefeld, *Gesellschaft* (n. 1 above), 158–220; T. Kioussopoulou, *Emperor or Manager: Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453* (Geneva, 2011), 27–38.

143 Barabási, *Linked* (n. 7 above), 123–59.

144 Laiou, "Correspondence" (n. 23 above). Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy" (n. 1 above), 313–14 speaks of rule by consensus and council-based decision making.

145 A. Christidou, "Ερευνώντας την ιστορία μέσα από άγνωστα βυζαντινά αυτοκρατορικά πορτρέτα σε εκκλησίες της Αλβανίας," in *Ανταπόδοση*, ed. S. Arvaniti (Athens, 2010), 537–62 and eadem, "Unknown Byzantine Art in the Balkan Area: Art, Power and Patronage in Twelfth- to Fourteenth-Century Churches in Albania" (Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute, 2011), 269–74; H. Gickler, *Kaiser Michael IX. Palaiologos (1278–1320)*, 35–46.

146 Angelov, *Imperial Ideology* (n. 28 above), 111.

147 D. M. Nicol, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1979), 6. Cf. also idem, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 161–63.

148 Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 343–46.

149 Kant. 1.43 (1:211.15–212.24), 1.48–50.

150 Table 2, nos. 20 and 26.

place.¹⁵¹ Second, the younger Andronikos was faster to fill the gap left by the unexpected death of another major hub, the heir apparent, coemperor Michael (IX), in October 1320.¹⁵² This mattered especially with regard to the soldiery, in which Andronikos II and his men had shown little interest: possibly in deliberate work division with his son and heir. Third, age helped Andronikos III, Michael's son, to attract many of the thus disconnected links. The future too obviously lay with the younger Andronikos, then in his early

twenties, rather than the sexagenerian Andronikos II: the only remaining alternative heir to the throne, Andronikos II's second son Konstantinos, had become his nephew's prisoner early on.

All the king's horses and all the king's men. . . .

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151 For this and the following point see the perceptive analysis by Kyritses, "Byzantine Aristocracy," 334–50.

152 On this see now Gickler, *Michael IX.*, 179–98.

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